

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Multiple Property Documentation Form**

This form is used for documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Register Bulletin 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

New Submission Amended Submission

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

New Deal Resources on Colorado's Eastern Plains

B. Associated Historic Contexts

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

- I. Roosevelt's Alphabet Army: 1933-1943
- II. The CCC and the SCS in Eastern Colorado: 1935-1942
- III. The PWA – Building a Framework for Eastern Colorado: 1933-1942
- IV. The WPA – Work for Everyone: 1935-1942

C. Form Prepared by

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D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archaeology and Historic Preservation.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments [].)

Signature and title of certifying official Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Signature of the Keeper _____ Date of Action _____

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Provide the following information on continuation sheets. Cite the letter and the title before each section of the narrative. Assign page numbers according to the instructions for continuation sheet in *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Register Bulletin 16B). Fill in page numbers for each section in the space below.

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Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
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- University
- Other

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National Archives and Records Administration; College Park, MD
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Western History and Genealogy Division, Denver Public Library

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 120 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503

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Colorado's Eastern Plains

This multiple property listing is organized around the built resources that resulted from numerous federal programs of the "New Deal" era on Colorado's eastern plains. While the entire nation suffered from the economic crisis of the Great Depression, the portion of Colorado that lies in the plains region faced additional crises, including the agricultural depression, drought, dust storms, and even grasshopper plagues. President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal programs were developed initially to provide relief to the destitute in all parts of the nation, but grew to include special reform and recovery programs and policies for agriculture and areas such as the Dust Bowl. This multiple property submission provides a context for understanding the conditions that eastern Colorado endured during the "dirty thirties," and a basis for evaluating the physical resources that were constructed as a result of the federal New Deal programs. It includes information on extant resources from 1933 through 1943, based partly upon a field survey in four eastern Colorado counties.

The following historic contexts developed for this Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) cover those New Deal programs which were initiated to provide relief through work projects to either improve or construct public works. Although public works programs were only part of the numerous New Deal policies and programs that were initiated in the years following the Great Depression, they are significant for the resulting built resources in the Plains counties of Colorado. There were numerous other New Deal programs which also affected life in eastern Colorado during the Depression years; they are briefly mentioned in the introductory background section.

- I. Roosevelt's Alphabet Army: 1933-1943***
- II. The CCC and the SCS in Eastern Colorado: 1935-1942***
- III. The PWA – Building a framework for Eastern Colorado: 1933-1942***
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Colorado's Eastern Plains*Historical Background*

The onset of the Great Depression is often associated with October 29, 1929, historically referred to as "Black Tuesday." In reality, the conditions leading up to the nation's economic collapse had been evident for years. Between September and November 1929, the Dow Jones Industrial Index did lose fully one-half of its value, from 452 to 224. As the depression continued to worsen into the early 1930s, the index fell to 58. Coinciding with the plummeting stock market was a dramatic increase in unemployment. In January 1930, there were approximately 4 million Americans without jobs. By December of that year, the number rose to 7 million. By early 1933, the number of unemployed doubled again when over one in four Americans was out of work.

While the stock market crash served as both the symbolic beginning of the Great Depression and its most visible early manifestation, depression had stalked parts of Colorado for nearly a decade. Unlike much of the rest of the nation, Colorado's economy never really recovered after the downturn following the boom years of World War I. Both mining and agriculture had grown during the flush years when high commodity prices had encouraged increased production. Farmers were induced to convert dry lands into plowed fields for quick profits; as a result, wheat acreage in the state had tripled between 1913 and 1919.¹ The period experienced increased rainfall resulting in large harvests. When prices fell after the war, though, Colorado's agricultural boom dissipated. The mining industry had suffered a similar fate, with growth in the early decades of the twentieth century followed by plunging metal prices between 1920 and 1930.

Nonetheless, immediately after the stock market crash, Coloradans remained stoic, if not exactly hopeful about the future. Agricultural prices had been slowly improving by the time of the stock market crash, although they still had not recovered to their prewar records. Farmers generally believed that with continued good crops, their personal financial situation would surely improve, even though this required increased production, more efficient machinery, and greater acreage of plowed fields. In 1929 there were just a few signs statewide of the impending economic catastrophe in Colorado. Employees were beginning to be laid off, companies were experiencing declining profits, and a few banks began to fail.² Still, the 1930 harvest was mixed, leaving hope for the future. As the *Julesburg Grit-Advocate* in October 1930 assured its readers, "Times have been better here than in practically any other section of the nation."³ This statement may have

¹James F. Wickens, Colorado in the Great Depression (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc, 1979).

²Ibid., pp. 9-10.

³In Stephen J. Leonard, Trials and Triumphs: A Colorado Portrait of the Great Depression, with FSA Photographs (Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado, 1993) 20.

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been reflective of the fact that times were so bad elsewhere. The combination of drought and depression that had hit the Midwestern states first had not reached Colorado yet. Although Colorado's agricultural economy began to suffer with the rest of the nation when farm prices declined in 1930, it was the severe and persistent drought that began in 1931 and lasted nearly a decade that was one of the key factors leading to the collapse of eastern Colorado's economy. Many fields lay barren from the hot sun and lack of water, and the farmers that did have crops often had to leave them rotting in the fields because it cost more to harvest them than they would receive in payment.

Thus the financial situation for both Colorado farmers and ranchers worsened in 1931, and by 1932, all of Colorado was suffering. The value of industrial products in the state had fallen from more than \$306 million in 1929 to less than \$184 million in 1931. Farmers continued to be hit by drought, crop failures, and low prices; they earned under \$82 million in 1932, compared to \$213 million in 1929. The Colorado State Federation of Labor reported that in December 1930, up to 90% of workers were working three days or fewer per week, and that 50% or more were not even working part time. Estimates in mid-1932 put the number of unemployed Coloradans at more than 16% of the state's workers; part-time workers, farmers, seasonal laborers, railroad men, and the "unemployables" were not included in these figures. Coloradans that were working saw either their hours or their salaries cut, or both. Suicides were also unfortunately on the rise in the state.⁴

As unemployment continued to rise in Colorado, more individuals turned to charities for assistance, both public and private. Whereas most charities around the turn of the twentieth century were privately funded, in the years leading up to the Depression, the amount of relief provided by local government agencies had been growing. By 1929, seventy-five percent of all relief nationwide was provided by local governments, with the remainder supplemented by private citizens.⁵ When these local government agencies were flooded with requests for relief during the Depression from unemployed workers and their families, they were unable to keep up with the case loads. With tax collections drastically reduced due to the economic conditions, most local and state governments, including Colorado's, were not in a position to give aid. Furthermore, most local tax-supported public charities throughout Colorado focused their resources on hospital charity wards; even if they had the money, these charities simply did not have programs in place to deal with the able-bodied unemployed.

Private charities in Colorado also experienced a drastic drop in donations in 1931, and

⁴Ibid., pp. 23-25.

⁵U.S., Federal Works Agency, Final Report on the WPA Program, 1935-43, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1976), p. 1.

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consequently were able to assist fewer residents. Hundreds of rural Coloradans moved to Denver when they lost their crops or their jobs, and consequently many well-known Denver charities folded in 1932 as economic conditions worsened. By 1933, with the Depression in its fourth year and the numbers of unemployed growing, several other private charities across the state collapsed under the demand; several local governments were nearly bankrupt. Desperate citizens turned to cooperative living in twelve cities in Colorado, with members earning supplies for hours worked on projects. Some of these projects included picking crops in fields where farmers could not afford to harvest them.⁶

The responses to the growing economic crisis from both the state and national governments in the early years of the 1930s were seen as slow, weak or ineffective. In 1931 and 1932, Governor Adams attempted to create prosperity and reduce unemployment with expanded highway construction, but failed on both accounts. Nearly three years after the onset of the national Depression, President Hoover finally signed the Emergency Relief and Construction Act. This act, which provided federal loans to the states to finance the construction of public works, did not halt the deepening depression. Nonetheless, with a presidential election looming, Coloradans, along with the rest of the country, looked to the federal government for assistance. They would not be disappointed. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, in his acceptance speech for the Democratic nomination for president in the summer of 1932, not only promised to lead the federal government and the country in a new direction, but coined the phrase which would forever be associated with his administration. "I pledge you, I pledge myself, to a new deal for the American people." The American press seized upon Roosevelt's words, and the "New Deal" became the term linked with Roosevelt's campaign of "relief, reform, and recovery."⁷

Immediately after his inauguration in March 1933, Roosevelt took action by declaring a bank holiday. The greatest impact this may have had was on the nation's mood – here, finally, was a president that would take action. Indeed, no one can accuse his administration of inaction. In his first one hundred days of office, Roosevelt worked with Congress to enact fifteen major pieces of legislation, more than any other period of American history. This action created an unprecedented number of bureaus, agencies, and programs which were designed not only to assist victims of the Depression and to stimulate economic recovery, but to also guarantee minimum living standards and prevent future economic crises. Sometimes referred to derisively as Roosevelt's "alphabet army," these New Deal programs were simultaneously criticized for creating the foundation for a welfare state, and praised for the hope they brought to an impoverished nation.

⁶Wickens, pp. 11-13.

⁷William Leuchtenburg, Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal (New York: Harper & Row, 1963) 8.

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At first, Roosevelt's New Deal was chiefly concerned with relief for the millions of Americans out of work through temporary welfare and job creation. It later grew to include regulation, relief, and reform in the areas of agriculture, banking, finance, housing, industry, labor, public utilities, securities, and transportation. Countless "alphabet" agencies were created, many of which were quickly revised, altered, or reborn as Roosevelt worked through the complex issues surrounding the Depression. Many of these federal agencies created work programs for the unemployed, which in turn resulted in the construction of thousands of public improvement projects across Colorado. These projects were built in every part of the state, as well as the rest of the nation, and provided a sound infrastructure for the economic boom that was to follow the second World War. The more familiar agencies which dealt with public works, the built environment, or conservation of the natural environment, were the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA), Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), Civil Works Administration (CWA), Federal Art Project (FAP), Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), Federal Housing Administration (FHA), Public Works Administration (PWA), Rural Electrification Administration (REA), Soil Conservation Service (SCS), Works Progress Administration (WPA), and the U.S. Housing Authority (USHA). Other agencies were aimed at reform of business practices, and included the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), Federal Reserve Board (FRB), National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), National Recovery Administration (NRA), and the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

The increased involvement of the federal government into numerous aspects of American life might appear on the surface to pose a dilemma for independent Coloradans. Demoralized by the Depression, though, Coloradans were ready to accept assistance and intervention from the federal government. In fact, Colorado along with the rest of the West had historically accepted federal assistance and regulation in numerous aspects of their lives, from dealing with the Indians, establishing and regulating railroads, and support and regulation of the mining industry. Especially in the early years of the New Deal, there were few complaints coming from Coloradans. After all, the federal government owned thirty-five percent of the state's lands, which correspondingly reduced the state's tax base; why shouldn't it help bail out the state?⁸ Furthermore, its citizens were truly in need. Between 1929 and 1932, unemployment had quadrupled in Colorado, and agricultural prices were continuing to fall. By the time of the 1932 presidential election, the drought was also severely impacting the well-being of its citizens. A majority of Coloradans voted for Roosevelt and his "New Deal." In turn, Colorado was one of the first states to receive aid, and eventually received \$2.78 in federal money back for each \$1 it spent during this period. Colorado also provided proportionately less of the required match for federal projects than most states. At one point, the state refused to provide any match for FERA funds at all, even though FERA eventually supported nearly a quarter of the state's population.

⁸Ibid, 111.

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Colorado was not the only western state that received more than their fair share of the New Deal “pie.” The relatively undeveloped states in the West placed in the first fourteen of states that received the most federal funds. The region received three times the national average for federal expenditures while providing only about one-third of that figure in locally generated revenues. In part, this illustrated the depth of the problems in the West during the Depression, but also exacerbated the dilemma facing the so-called independent Westerner. As Robert Athearn writes in the Mythic West of Westerners during the Depression, “The more they received, the more their collective inferiority complex surfaced. That they understood their dilemma made the situation all the more irritating, yet they chose to go on, gnawing at the hand that fed them . . . In part, that was a rationalization of their disinclination to acknowledge any political debts to an administration that had bailed them out of deep trouble.”⁹

The political maneuverings of the New Deal era in Colorado provide another ironic tale of contrasts. Colorado was not a typical Democratic stronghold, but it did support Roosevelt as well as other Democrats during much of the Depression. The typically Republican state elected Democrat Edward Costigan as U.S. Senator, as well as Democrat Edward “Big Ed” Johnson as Governor. While Costigan was a fervent supporter of Roosevelt’s New Deal, Johnson rarely found anything about the federal relief programs that he liked. Johnson frequently referred to relief work as “piddling around with leaf-raking,” although when asked to speak at the dedication of a WPA building, he was quick to praise the workers in that particular locality.

Political controversies were not the only issues which dogged the New Deal programs. Many of them faced criticism for how the money was distributed, who got the money, how an agency was set up, and who received jobs or appointments. Today, however, some of the New Deal programs that are remembered more fondly are those that provided employment through public improvement construction projects. The Civilian Conservation Corps, the Public Works Administration, and the Works Projects Administration are recognized for the lasting legacy of public works that remain in every part of the state. The WPA at its peak employed more than 40,000 Coloradans, and built projects in every county and virtually every community across the state. Due to the large federal land holdings in the state, as well as the drought crisis in the Dust Bowl area, Colorado benefited from thousands of CCC projects supervised by the Soil Conservation Service, the Forest Service, the Bureau of Reclamation, and the National Parks. For eastern Colorado, the policies and programs of the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) helped to reverse the results of one of the nation’s worst environmental disasters, the Dust Bowl, by implementing conservation farming practices. Water was another important issue in the semi-arid state, and several of the largest water projects in the nation were constructed or started by the PWA in the state, including the Moffat Tunnel/Denver Water Supply project and the

⁹Robert G. Athearn, The Mythic West in Twentieth-Century America (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1986), p. 103.

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Colorado-Big Thompson project. These are just a few examples of the myriad New Deal programs that not only helped to ease the suffering and boost morale of Coloradans during the Depression, but also paved the way for increased federal assistance in the everyday lives of its people.

The New Deal was truly a radical departure in government policy – to increase borrowing and spending during a depression – but these were desperate times. As one of the most documented and debated periods of American history, many argue over the results of Roosevelt's New Deal. Certainly the nation's gearing up for World War II had a significant impact on ending the unemployment problems of the thirties. However, it is clear that all of Colorado, including the Eastern Plains, benefited greatly from the influx of federal New Deal dollars and programs. In the short term, it assisted Coloradans suffering from the effects of the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression. In the long term, the construction of thousands of public infrastructure projects and the implementation of natural resource conservation practices prepared Colorado for the economic boom that came during and after World War II.

The Drought and Dust Bowl on Colorado's Eastern Plains

The collapse of Colorado's agricultural economy in 1931 was felt more deeply in eastern Colorado than the rest of the state. Many of its residents were recent settlers who had never known the effects of the last severe drought that occurred in the 1890s. Indeed, eastern Colorado had seen dramatic growth since the turn of the twentieth century, both in the number of dry-land farms and its population. Between 1900 and 1930 the number of farm owners in the entire state rose by 110 percent, and the number of farm tenants by 270 percent. The sparsely-settled counties in eastern Colorado counties were part of this population boom. Baca County grew in population nearly 14 times, from 759 to 10,570; Kit Carson County in east-central Colorado grew by 600 percent; and Logan County quintupled its population.¹⁰ This relatively recent settlement of the plains happened to coincide not only with the beginning of a comparatively wet weather cycle, but also with advances in agricultural machinery. New implements speeded up plowing, planting, and harvesting, resulting in greater crop acreage. Traditional farming methods, including deep plowing, manuring, and crop rotation were ignored in favor of specialized crops and maximized production. More significantly, the native grasses which had held the fragile soil on the plains for thousands of years were plowed under. Finally, World War I brought record prices and new overseas markets for crops. Coinciding as it did with years of abundant rains, Colorado farmers responded to the call "Wheat will win the war!" by planting even more acreage and reaching new production heights.

¹⁰See Appendix B for a population graph for eastern Colorado from 1900-1930, taken from the 1936 "Report on Land Resources of the Great Plains"

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Wheat lured new settlers to eastern Colorado because it was a high profit crop; it was also a crop with considerable risk. However, when ten bad years could be offset by one bumper crop, speculators or "wheat prospectors" as well as permanent residents were drawn into the area. With the low cost of land in eastern Colorado and minimal or no taxes, these speculators could buy unplowed land, pay someone else to work the property, and then plant it in the cheapest manner possible. Many would later blame these "suitcase" farmers for the environmental devastation that followed, not the traditional farmers who were more committed to conservation.¹¹ Other studies of the events leading up to the Dust Bowl would paint a different picture, noting problems stemming from the settled farmers who generally came from back east, bringing with them a set of farming practices that were not suited to the West.

At the end of World War I, agricultural price supports were removed and overseas demand declined as European nations rebuilt their agricultural economy. In order to sustain their cash flow, eastern Colorado farmers had to further expand acreage and cultivation. Since most of the good farm land was already under cultivation, Colorado farmers pressed on into more marginal lands. By 1931, approximately 60 percent of the sod in Baca County had been broken for wheat.¹² As pasture land changed over to crop land, ranchers overgrazed cattle in the even more marginal areas that remained.

In 1930, in spite of record acreage cultivation and harvests, Colorado farmers were receiving less payment for their efforts than during the boom years of WWI. They were unable to repay loans for their land, machinery, and even their seeds; farm bankruptcies began to rise, and rural bank closures became common. Farmers nationwide stopped purchasing manufactured products, hurting local retailers and eventually the production factories. Tax delinquencies affected all types of community services including schools, roads, and other public works. Destitute farmers could not pay property taxes. Farmers without a corn crop lacked food for their animals and the cobs they used for fuel.¹³

Title buyers began swarming into eastern Colorado to buy land from farmers in default. Farm prices and wages continued to drop to record lows in early 1933, and threats of violence and demands for government action increased. In February, 500 farmers marched into Julesburg and took a neighbor's repossessed machinery. Another 200 farmers showed up at the Sedgwick County Courthouse in March to threaten action about taxes and county expenses. Ten days later, nearly 1,500 farmers from northern Colorado marched on the state capital "to encourage"

¹¹Athearn, pp. 78-81.

¹²R. Douglas Hurt, The Dust Bowl: An Agricultural and Social History (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1981), p. 27.

¹³Leonard, p. 26.

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reduced tax assessments on their lands.¹⁴ It was soon evident that any steps to aid the farmers would have to come not from the state, but the federal government.

Declining prices and the effects of the nation's economic depression were not the only problems facing eastern Colorado. Throughout the next decade, this region would experience extreme drought combined with strong winds. The southern Plains area typically received about eighteen inches of annual precipitation. With conservation efforts in place to retain subsoil moisture, this amount could be adequate for some satisfactory crops. However, the deficiency of even a few inches can mean the difference between a bountiful harvest and economic disaster. Furthermore, with virtually no conservation efforts in place, the effects of the extreme drought that hit in the 1930s were multiplied. Springfield, Colorado averaged more than three inches below normal between 1931 and 1935; some of the surrounding counties in the adjoining states were even worse.¹⁵ Southeastern Colorado, located at the epicenter of what would soon be called the "Dust Bowl," received only 126 total inches of moisture for the years between 1930 and 1939. This was 205 inches less than the previous decade, and well below the 18 inches annually needed to grow wheat. Although some crops in the irrigated fields in the areas adjacent to the South Platte and Arkansas rivers survived, most of the dry-land farms that predominated much of eastern Colorado did not.¹⁶ For example, 1934 was so dry that nearly half the state's agricultural acres produced no crops. No crops meant no protection for the soil when normal or above normal spring winds arrived.

Dust was not uncommon in the more arid areas of Colorado when the high plains winds blew. Consequently, no one was really surprised to see a few "dusters" in eastern Colorado in 1931. However, these were just a premonition of the dust storms that would come later in the 1930s. By 1933, the dust storms were so intense that life became difficult for both the people and livestock of eastern Colorado. The black blizzards of the 1930s differed from those of previous years. These were more intense, lasted for days, and returned nearly every year during the "dirty thirties." Towns had to turn on their street lights during the day. Dust sifted into buildings, causing people to put wet sheets over doors and windows to try to stop the infiltration. Residents of eastern Colorado wore goggles or masks of wet towels. Cases of dust pneumonia reached

¹⁴Wickens, p. 220-221.

¹⁵Hurt, p. 29.

¹⁶Leonard, pp. 112, 114.

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Figure 1: Prowers County dust storm

Photo from Farm Security Administration - Office of War Information Photograph Collection,
Library of Congress, fsa 8e03000

epidemic proportions in southeastern Colorado, in animals as well as humans.¹⁷ Red Cross workers and nurses were sent to the towns of Springfield and Walsh in Baca County with masks and goggles. The Walsh High School gymnasium was sealed so coughing children hospitalized there could get some relief from the never ending dust.¹⁸ It covered roads, fences, farm machinery, and even houses, and stopped rail traffic with high drifts.

The storms not only caused mental and physical anguish to residents, but destroyed millions of acres of farm land. One storm in May 1934 lasted for several days, eventually depositing dust in Chicago, New York, and Savannah, Georgia. It was estimated that this one storm removed 300 million tons of fertile top soil off of the Great Plains. Although this was one of the most severe individual storms, the dust storms actually increased overall in numbers and in intensity as the “dirty thirties” continued. The Soil Conservation Service measured the frequency of storms and the length of the storms, and both figures reveal that 1937 was the worst year for dust storms.¹⁹

¹⁷Wickens, p. 240.

¹⁸Leonard, p. 120.

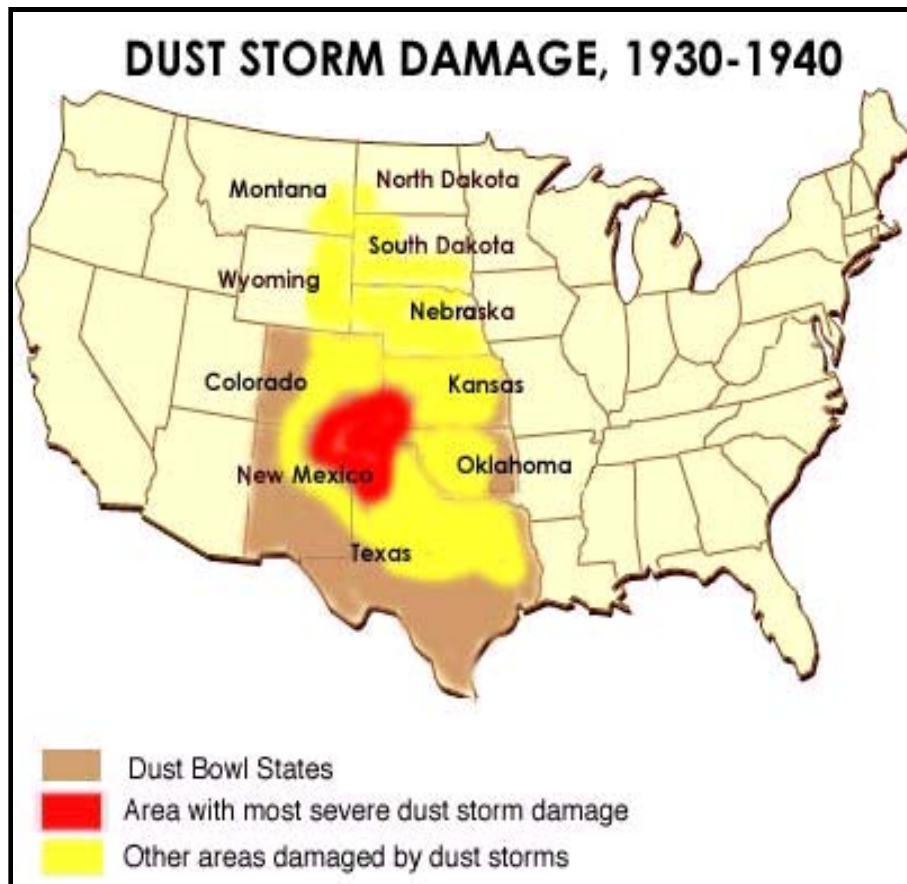
¹⁹Donald Worster, Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 13, 15.

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*Figure 2: Map of Dust Bowl States and area of damage;
cited from <<http://www.iaction.com/exemplar/media/lmap.htm>>*

During this period of blowing dust, called by some the worst ecological disaster in the history of the United States, an ever-changing area of over fifty million acres encompassing primarily southeastern Colorado, western Kansas, northeastern New Mexico, and the panhandles of Texas and Oklahoma became known as the Dust Bowl. Although there were no specific boundaries – it could change from year to year, season to season, and day to day – Figure 2 shows the general boundaries for the Dust Bowl area during the 1930s. In Colorado, Baca County in the southeast corner of the state was the hardest hit, although dust storms were not uncommon as far north as Burlington in Kit Carson County and Julesburg in Sedgwick County.²⁰ As if all the dust storms

²⁰Lyle Stone, Interview with Deon Wolfenbarger, 3 March 2005.

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Figure 3: Arid grazing land in Weld County

Photo from Farm Security Administration -

Office of War Information Photograph Collection, Library of Congress, fsa 8b18592

were not enough, the Colorado plains suffered from recurring and serious infestations of grasshoppers during the thirties. To make matters worse, there were sometimes brief periods of heavy rain, which in turn caused severe floods and even further damage to these counties denuded of vegetation by poor farming practices and the drought. The citizens of eastern Colorado and the other Dust Bowl states were truly in distress.

The earliest New Deal programs basically treated the problems of rural areas and the drought states no differently than that of industrial or urban areas. The dust storms, however, clearly illustrated that not only were farmers and ranchers facing different issues than their urban

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counterparts, but that the Dust Bowl areas were also experiencing one of the nation's worst ecological disasters. In order to provide the administration with a first hand account of the conditions in the West, Harry Hopkins, administrator of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, sent out Lorena Hickok to visit the region in 1933 and 1934. Hickok's report on Colorado noted that the drought conditions were so bad in the northeastern part of the state that some farmers broke their plow blades on bedrock because so much topsoil had blown away. Ranchers had not fared any better. Cattle searched for grass "between clumps of Russian thistle" and came up with "mostly sand." They competed with rabbits for scarce forage. Hickok learned that several farmers had recently "gone insane." Land values dropped so low, to less than a dollar an acre, that mortgage holders didn't even bother to foreclose.²¹

A national response to the problems of this section of the country was needed, along with special programs and policies as well. Recognizing that unemployment problems in rural areas were different from those in urban areas, the Federal Emergency Relief Act or FERA, added a Rural Rehabilitation Division in 1934. It featured two main policies: one that made loans to farmers, not only to provide relief, but to eventually encourage resource rehabilitation and conservation practices; and the other resettling farmers from nonproductive areas to fertile land. The latter policy purchased sub-marginal farmland in order to retire it from production, and assisted the farmers with loans to resettle on better land. Resettlement was not always met with enthusiasm, but in Baca County, over 200,000 thousand acres were eventually purchased, rehabilitated, and later designated as the Comanche National Grassland.

By 1935, nearly twenty percent of the total cropland in the southern Great Plains was idle and one in every four farm dwellings was abandoned in forty-five counties lying in five states in the Dust Bowl Area. By 1936, the Drought Relief Committee had designated 1,194 counties as "emergency drought counties." In some counties on the Great Plains, up to ninety percent of the farm families were on relief at one time or another; typically it was up to one-third.²² A study of rural Colorado families on relief in 1935 funded by the WPA showed that percentage of families on relief was higher primarily in the eastern counties. To be sure, other counties also had a high number of families on relief, especially those in the extreme southern part of the state and in some mining counties. However, of the twenty-three counties categorized as "eastern" for this multiple property submission, fifteen were among the twenty-eight Colorado counties that were above the state average of 25 percent of the families on relief. Nearly 50 percent of the families in Baca County were on relief; Kiowa, Kit Carson, Huerfano, Las Animas, and Prowers counties had figures of 40 percent or higher; 30 percent of the families in Adams and Otero were

²¹In Richard Lowitt, The New Deal and the West (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), p. 21-22.

²²*Ibid.*, p. 35, 37-38.

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receiving relief aid; and El Paso, Bent, Weld, Cheyenne, Elbert, Arapaho, and Yuma counties were also above the state average.²³ For the purposes of this particular study, “relief” did not include New Deal programs such as WPA employment. In fact, for the relief cases that were considered “closed” during the period of this study, 55.8 percent were transferred to other public agencies, such as the WPA, the county or old age pensions, or Rural Resettlement.²⁴ Without the other forms of New Deal assistance, then, the figures representing the needy rural families would be much higher.

With so many rural families in distress, there didn't seem to be any end in sight for the problems of agriculture on the plains. When it became obvious that providing relief alone would not solve any of the underlying issues or causes, the New Dealers began to promote reform instead of just providing relief. In the summer of 1936, President Roosevelt asked Morris L. Cooke, administrator of the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) to chair a Great Plains Drought Area Committee. With his background with this agency, Morris Cooke was already familiar with the plight of rural residents. The drought committee quickly prepared and presented their recommendations to the President on August 27, 1936 in the *Report of the Great Plains Drought Area Committee*. In the report, they had taken to heart the thoughts Roosevelt had earlier expressed to them about the region in a letter of July 22, 1936:

We have supposed that the modes of settlement and of development which have been prevalent represented the ordinary course of civilization. But perhaps in this area of relatively little rain, practices brought from the more humid part of the country are not most suitable under the prevailing natural conditions.²⁵

The report repeated Roosevelt's concerns. “The basic cause of the present Great Plains situation is our attempt to impose upon the region a system of agriculture to which the Plains are not adapted or to bring into a semi-arid region methods which are suitable, on the whole, only for a humid region.” Wheat farming, for example, was a highly speculative venture in the semi-arid plains area. Most wheat farmers here received ninety percent of their income over a twenty year period – in just one year. Yet in order to achieve this one good year of crops, continual plowing of the soil was required in all the other non-productive years, exposing it to the destructive forces

²³Crowley County was omitted from this list; however, a graphic map in the same report shows that Crowley county had over 30% of its families on relief. From Olaf F. Larson, “With Rural Relief in Colorado: February-November, 1935,” Research Bulletin No. 1(Fort Collins, CO: Rural Research Section, Research Division, Works Progress Administration), p. 7.

²⁴Ibid, p. 8.

²⁵Morris Cooke, et al, “Report of the Great Plains Drought Area Committee,” (Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hopkins Papers, Box 13: 27 August 1936). Cited from: <<http://newdeal.feri.org/hopkins/hop27.htm>>.

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of sun and wind. The report estimated that eighty percent of the soil in the Great Plains was already in some state of erosion due to wheat speculation and overgrazing, and as much as fifteen percent was already permanently or seriously injured. A study conducted by the Colorado State Planning Commission on the land resources of the Great Plains area of Colorado confirmed the extent of the soil erosion disaster in Colorado caused by the wind and dust storms of the 1930s (see figure 4 for a map showing the extent of wind erosion in eastern Colorado).²⁶

The *Report* presented a case for agricultural reform in the region through government policies and programs, since the objectives could no longer be attained by individual action. "Reorganization of farming practices demands the cooperation of many agencies, including the local, State and Federal governments." One of the key suggestions of the *Report* was to take certain "sub-marginal lands permanently out of commercial production" and to study other lands for their best utilization. New practices should be adopted to remaining agricultural and grazing lands, such as regrassing, contour plowing, furrowing, terracing, listing, strip-cropping, and tree planting. Not all of these ideas were unknown. The dust storms merely brought to the forefront what scientists had already begun to preach in research stations at land-grant universities across the country – there was something very wrong with land-management techniques of the previous decades. In part, though, it was faulty science that led to the severe soil erosion problem in the Great Plains states. After the turn of the nineteenth century, farmers adopted a so-called scientific "dryland" farming methods. They used implements which were geared towards conserving moisture in the soil, rather than preventing wind erosion. Dryland farming methods used soil mulching, summer fallowing, and dragging, as well as equipment such as the one-way plow, which further broke down the soil structure and burned organic matter. Farmers believed they were adapting agriculture to the dry land, but were in fact introducing techniques which would hasten soil erosion when the wet cycle eventually ended.²⁷ As a result, when the drought cycle returned, there were repeated crop failures, widespread abandonment of farms, and the deterioration of millions of acres into gullies and wasteland. On cattle pasture lands, overgrazing and drought also limited vegetation to sparse stands of grass and stunted Russian thistle.

The *Report of the Great Plains Drought Area Committee* attracted widespread attention to a region that was already infamous during this era. Life in the Dust Bowl was depicted in song, fiction novels such as *The Grapes of Wrath*, and the WPA produced film by Pare Lorentz's film *The Plow that Broke the Plains*. The entire nation was aware of the special problems facing the Great Plains area of the United States. Thus in addition to other New Deal programs that aimed at general economic relief and recovery, Roosevelt's administration initiated several policies

²⁶John T. Barnett, Edward D. Foster, & Irwin J. McCrary, "Report on Land Resources of the Great Plains Area of Colorado," (Denver: Colorado State Planning Commission, November 1936).

²⁷Robert Bruce Parham, "The Civilian Conservation Corps in Colorado, 1933-1942," (Masters Thesis, University of Colorado, 1981), pp. 92-93.

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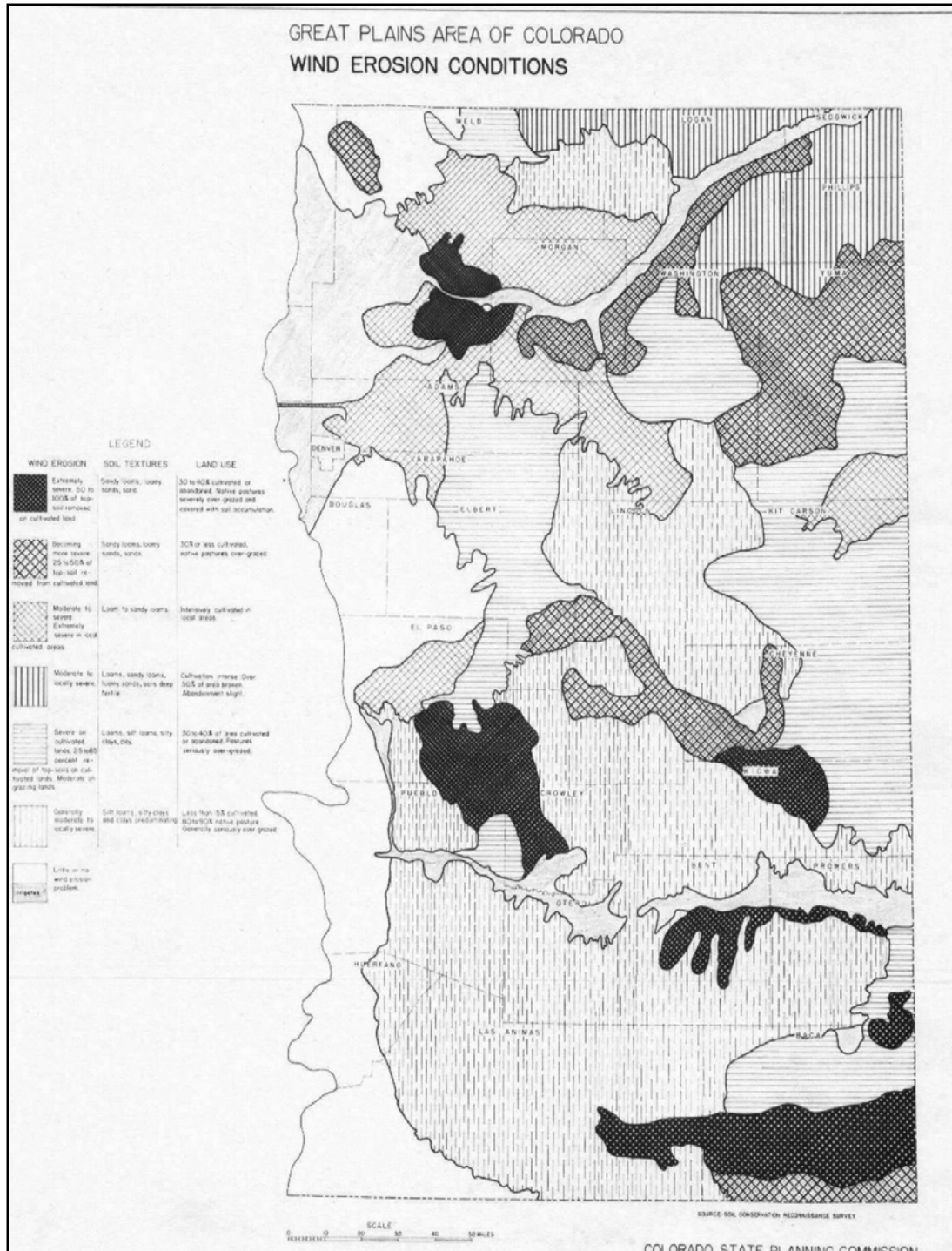


Figure 4: Damage to soils from wind erosion in the Great Plains region of Colorado.
From Barnett, November 1936.

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aimed directly at the farmer, rancher, and Dust Bowl residents. In addition to relief and recovery, these programs offered reform: a chance for the plains region of Colorado and the rest of the West to transform itself. The agrarian ideals of the past decades had been broken down by years of dust, drought and depression. Rugged individualism could not solve the massive soil erosion and agricultural depression; it took the intervention of the federal government. Although Coloradans may not have wanted to admit to a need for federal assistance, it was readily accepted.

By the time of the publication of the *Report of the Great Plains Drought Area Committee* in 1936, the drought conditions in southeastern Colorado had forced almost one-half of the residents to become dependent upon some form of relief. This relief from various New Deal programs, in fact, was the only thing that allowed people to remain during the drought and Dust Bowl years. When these programs ceased in the mid-1930s for various reasons, and before other New Deal programs took their place, a large number of Coloradans left the eastern part of the state. Except for those counties adjacent to large front range cities, all counties in eastern Colorado lost population during the 1930s. Baca County lost over 40 percent, and most other counties lost about 25 percent. The total outward migration from eastern Colorado was almost 28,000 people.²⁸

For those that remained in the plains region of Colorado, it is clear that in many instances the New Deal provided the only means to survive the desperate conditions of the 1930s. In terms of public facilities constructed as part of federal work relief programs, the number and amount of projects assigned to this area was proportionately higher than many other areas of the state due to the extreme economic and environmental conditions. As a result, Colorado communities on the eastern plains today still feature a number of significant public improvement projects built by the New Deal, including town streets, county roads, schools, community buildings, and public utilities. More significantly for the Great Plains landscape, the New Deal left eastern Colorado with a legacy of constructive accomplishments in both the use and conservation of its natural resources. Through the establishment of soil conservation methods, the implementation of water conservation features, and the promotion of new grazing practices, the New Deal truly ushered in a new era for the region.

²⁸Wickens, pp. 254-255.

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Eastern Colorado was at the heart of the region that was suffering the most from the combined effects of the Great Depression and the drought. Furthermore, no group in the nation had been harder hit by the Depression than farmers and farm workers. Agricultural income had fallen nationwide by a staggering two-thirds during the Depression's first three years. A bushel of wheat that sold for \$2.94 in 1920 dropped to \$1 in 1929 and 30 cents in 1932. In proportion to its population, Colorado had the fifth largest group of farmers on relief in the nation. In southeastern Colorado, nearly 60 percent of the residents were totally dependent upon Federal Emergency Relief Administration assistance by mid-1934.²⁹

In Roosevelt's "First Hundred Days" in office, beginning with his inauguration as President of the United States on March 4, 1933, several programs and policies were initiated that aimed squarely at the needs of rural Americans, and especially those living in the Great Plains. Roosevelt's "New Deal" for the United States also included other programs that were set up to benefit all Americans, but which also aided rural families. As the Roosevelt administration recognized that destitute farmers had different needs from urban dwellers, a rural rehabilitation program was created to provide work programs. The goal in all work relief programs was to conserve skills and work habits, in addition to uplifting the morale of those who had been unemployed for long periods. In addition to work relief programs, however, other New Deal agencies had significant impacts in eastern Colorado.

Federal Emergency Relief Administration

One of the most significant relief programs in the First Hundred Days was the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), created on May 12, 1933. Initially, FERA provided direct relief payments, but eventually grew to include work relief programs. Initially, \$500 million was appropriated for FERA to give as grants to state emergency relief administrations for relief purposes. Harry L. Hopkins, administrator of FERA, sent telegrams to seven states to inform them that aid was on the way the first day after he was authorized to inaugurate operations. Colorado was one of those seven initial states to receive aid. However, all states were required to match FERA's grants, and this would proved to be a troubling issue for Colorado. The Twenty-ninth General Assembly, known as the "Twiddling Twenty-ninth," did not take any action to raise matching FERA funds while it was in session during this initial federal allocation, and instead adjourned. Despite the fact that the Colorado legislature did not provide any matching funds, Hopkins nonetheless continued to send the state more than two-thirds of a million dollars per month through mid-summer 1933. Even after the legislature's adjournment, Hopkins still sent approximately \$500,000 per month after that with the hope that Colorado would soon provide the match. The state, however, never lived up to its requirements.

²⁹Wickens, p. 226.

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By the end of 1933, 83.4 percent of Colorado's relief funds had come from the federal government, 16.4 percent from local communities, and a mere 0.2 percent from the state.³⁰ In August 1933, Governor Edwin C. Johnson called a special session of the legislature in order to find a solution to the funding problem. After passing an emergency measure to tax motor vehicles, within weeks the Colorado Supreme Court declared it illegal. Johnson called another special session in December and urged passage of a sales tax, but the legislature decided instead to adjourn for a two week Christmas vacation. Left without any apparent plans to provide the state's contribution to the program, Harry Hopkins threatened to halt all FERA operations on January 1, 1934, which now topped 85 percent of all relief in the state. Although Governor Johnson appealed to Hopkins to continue FERA aid, the Colorado State Relief Committee refused to join in his petition. With no funding in sight, Hopkins halted all FERA relief assistance to Colorado on December 31, 1933.³¹

When the legislature adjourned and word got out that the FERA funds would be cut, many people, especially in Denver, began to talk in revolutionary tones. Groups of unemployed men staged two riots, another mob almost killed a federal agent, and grocery stores were "rolled." Local newspapers refused to cover the incidents for fear of inciting further riots. In order to garner attention to their plight, a group of people planned to meet in front of the state capitol when the legislature reconvened on January 3, 1934. Although events of this day are not well recorded and in some dispute, one account states that the leaders of the local communist party took control of the crowd and then stormed the state capitol.

Following their communist leaders, the rioters flowed into the senate chamber as panic-stricken senators fled before them. The throng crowded into the lawmakers' seats. Mounting the rostrum, the spokesman began "the first Communist controlled meeting ever held under the dome of any state capitol in the United States."³²

As the suffering of Coloradans increased throughout the state, and primarily out of fear of continued uprisings, the General Assembly finally passed a bill which would divert highway funds and increase the gasoline tax to provide the necessary matching funds. FERA relief money was immediately released again to Colorado. This was not the only problem facing Colorado's need to provide the necessary matching funds for FERA. Angry over what he viewed as constant interference by the federal government in administering FERA in Colorado, Governor Johnson moved to withhold the state's matching funds again in early 1934. When Colorado was yet again threatened with losing their federal assistance, Johnson demanded the removal of the

³⁰Ibid., pp. 60-62.

³¹Ibid., pp. 72-73.

³²Ibid., p. 76.

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regional FERA director. All the while, FERA continued to fund all relief activities in the state while waiting for the state's new gasoline tax revenues to come in. When the state was able to provide its share in the fall of 1934, Johnson then demanded the removal of the federally appointed state FERA administrator. By the time the problems between the federal government and Colorado were finally ironed out, President Roosevelt decided in early 1935 that "The Federal Government must and shall quit this business of relief."

FERA relief funds were intended to be distributed in the states according to certain established guidelines. These unfortunately were not always followed by the state or local agencies. For example, the relief money was planned to provide for the "subsistence" needs of a family in a particular area; the local relief agency was allowed to estimate the minimum monthly income requirements. In practice, therefore, the amount of FERA relief given to families varied considerably from state to state and from county to county. The average relief payment in the United States at the start of FERA was \$14.13 per month, increasing to \$28.13 by January 1935. In Colorado at this same time, relief payments averaged about \$10 per family at the beginning, dropped to a low of \$5.20 in January 1934, and then gradually rose to a little more than \$20 per month later that year.³³ Some counties were far more generous than others. In Denver county, the per capita relief costs were \$8.67, with more than 30 percent of that coming from local funds. In Sedgwick county, however, where an October 1933 report revealed "malnutrition exists in larger families, especially among the foreign born," the county spent just \$1.98 per capita in relief during 1933-1934, with less than 5 percent coming from the local agency.³⁴ When the country relief administrator from Montrose boasted that he was able to get by with small amounts of food and 15 cents an hour pay in his relief program, the FERA field agent was outraged

When you tell me that a man, his wife and 10 children got \$6 and that you consider this adequate, frankly I can hardly restrain my feelings on the matter. You seem to boast of this as a great achievement. To me this is unbearable. I would like to make it very clear that the FERA is not anxious to see on how little a family can live; it is anxious to see that they are provided with adequate relief.³⁵

In spite of the federal government's unhappiness with local administration of its relief program, FERA was significant for establishing the beginning of partnerships between the Federal government and state and local governments in providing relief. FERA also did more than just provide money for direct relief. To meet the special needs of destitute American farmers, a rural rehabilitation program was created. One agency of the New Deal rural program was the Federal

³³Ibid., p. 79.

³⁴Leonard, p. 55.

³⁵In Wickens, p. 113.

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Surplus Relief Corporation, which purchased surplus farm products and then transferred them to FERA for distribution to those in need. FERA also set up a work relief program within the rural rehabilitation program. The projects were intended to conserve skills, work habits, and morals of the participants, so the aim was to match the unemployed with work suited to their abilities. FERA was trying to avoid the stigma of past relief projects where men were required to chop wood, for example, to prove they were willing to work. These projects often lacked sufficient funds for construction, so a good deal of the work was maintenance, giving rise to the complaint towards "leaf-raking projects." With FERA, more useful and carefully planned projects were constructed as there was money spent on materials as well as wages.³⁶

Although not all of the FERA projects in Colorado were construction, several in eastern Colorado were. To counteract the images of relief workers mending books in various libraries across the state, several construction projects were completed in Loveland, including library renovations, ballpark improvements, and constructing bridges over ditches. Sterling resurfaced streets and modernized its airport, the town of Las Animas put in a storm sewer, and Brush landscaped a six-acre addition to its cemetery.³⁷ One of the more controversial projects in eastern Colorado was the small dam on Horse Creek constructed ten miles north of Holly. It was engineered solely as a flood control measure, but the local government, remembering the drought conditions, insisted on keeping water in the lake, in spite of repeated warnings from FERA engineers. The town even used it for recreation and stocked fish in it! After a heavy rain, where runoff conditions were made worse by the lack of any grass or vegetation, the dam broke and flooded the town on August 28, 1935. Many locals blamed the disaster on the shoddy FERA work, forgetting the recurring stories that had run in the local paper highlighting the city's blatant refusal to use it for its intended purposes.

In spite of these examples of work relief projects, the majority of FERA payments were for direct relief. Following Roosevelt's desire to get out of the "business" of the dole, FERA was thus gradually phased out, making its last payments to Colorado in December 1935. The state, in theory, was now supposed to fill the relief needs of Coloradans. FERA operations in Colorado were viewed by some as a failure. The program gave out little money in rural areas; it was inconsistent in its payments; and it was the source of disagreement between Colorado politicians and the federal government. All of these were more the fault of state politicians than the agency itself. A fair appraisal is that it failed to save people's pride. Work was still preferred to direct relief. Nonetheless, it is significant to remember that FERA once helped to feed, clothe, and house one-fourth of the state's population during one of its most desperate times.

³⁶Final Report on the WPA Program, p. 3.

³⁷Leonard, p. 51.

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While FERA was just getting underway, the nation's unemployment figures continued to rise. The Roosevelt administration had put into place several programs in hopes of getting people back to work, including the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the Public Works Administration (PWA). By late 1933, however, none of these programs had enough effect yet to stave off the coming winter emergency. The CCC was aimed solely at providing employment for young, unmarried men, while the Public Works Administration focused on large scale projects. Since large public works projects required careful planning and technical expertise, many were not yet underway in 1933. The PWA was therefore not producing results as quickly as conditions demanded. Nationwide, the Depression was entering into its fifth year; winter was approaching, and fifteen million people were unemployed. There were serious worries of unrest among the large number of unemployed. A new form of aid was needed – one that was quick, and yet did not put employable people on the “dole.” In an attempt to end the federal government's role in “dole and make-work projects,” Roosevelt's administration experimented with a new work relief program, the Civil Works Administration (CWA).

With a goal to provide quick emergency employment during the winter months of 1933-1934, Harry Hopkins, chief administrator of FERA, proposed a series of public works programs in late 1933 which were intended to supplement the assistance of FERA until the other relief programs could take effect. As a result, the Civil Works Administration was created in November 1933. Roosevelt pledged to provide jobs for four million people within thirty days. Unlike FERA, which was administered out of each state and locality, the CWA was established as a separate federally-operated program. Part of the PWA funding was diverted to the CWA to be used for direct employment. In just two months after its creation, over four million Americans were employed by the “most massive work-relief experiment undertaken.”³⁸ Requirements for CWA projects were that they had to take place on public property, be constructive in nature, and have a cost ratio of approximately 70 percent labor to 30 percent materials. Local businesses as well as the communities were encouraged to furnish building supplies so that most of the funds would support wages.

CWA began operations in Colorado in late November 1933, after Harry Hopkins chose Captain Casper D. Shawver, a Fort Collins engineer, as the state administrator. Although intended as an immediate “quick fix” work relief program, there were still several hurdles that faced Colorado before it could start any CWA projects. First, since federal law required that almost all of the CWA appropriations be spent on workers' wages, a community generally had to provide both equipment and materials. If the community planning a work project was not able to provide all of the materials, the State Relief Committee was to advance the remainder, but many towns were

³⁸Bonnie Fox Schwartz, The Civil Works Administration, 1933-1936 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), ii.

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slow to realize this. Furthermore, many in Colorado thought that a requirement for employment was that workers had to be on the relief rolls. When it was finally clear that this was not the case, many who had delayed in signing up suddenly swamped the state relief offices.³⁹

Once the program was finally underway, a variety of modest improvement projects were undertaken in Colorado. Many were small jobs, since the projects were intended to last only ninety days. Several projects involved only a few men, such as repair work to public streets and properties. A few other projects were quite large and involved hundreds of men, such as the riprapping of the South Platte River in Denver. One of the largest in eastern Colorado, and notably the very first CWA project in the entire state, was the flood control work on Willow Creek in Lamar. This project was so successful in changing the character of the area that citizens decided to turn it into a park. Several WPA projects in the 1930s were successful in changing the dust-blown sandy banks of Willow Creek into an aesthetic recreation spot. Most eastern Colorado projects were quite small in comparison, however, and actual construction projects are rare. Since the CWA was so short-lived, and was immediately followed by the WPA, it is not unusual that today many people confuse the two programs. Willow Creek Park proudly states on an entry sign that it was the first "WPA" project in the state, and the town well in Flagler has been referred to over the years as the "WPA well," when in fact it was constructed by the CWA.

Nationwide, the CWA met Roosevelt's goal of providing much needed short-term employment. By Thanksgiving 1933, 800,000 were people at work, and by mid-January, almost 4.3 million people received benefits from the CWA. Hopkins purportedly told FDR "Well, they're all at work, but for God's sake, don't ask me what they're doing."⁴⁰ At this point, though, CWA expenditures exceeded their November appropriations. Hopkins worried about the agency's ability to make future payrolls, and almost as quickly as the CWA program began, he was forced to cut back expenditures. Hopkins instructed state CWA administrators to cut weekly working hours immediately. For small towns and rural districts with less than 25,000 residents, the new maximum was only fifteen worker hours per week; in more densely populated areas it was cut from thirty down to twenty-four.⁴¹ At its peak in Colorado in mid-January, 33,411 residents had received CWA assistance. Nonetheless, the Colorado program rejected twice as many as it hired.⁴² By Easter weekend in 1934, the program closed down completely.

Lasting just a little over four months, by the time FERA absorbed CWA on March 31, 1934, unemployed workers from all walks of life had found jobs. Many worked on construction-

³⁹Wickens, pp. 80-81.

⁴⁰In Schwartz, p. 182.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 213.

⁴²Wickens, p. 81.

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related projects, such as repairing or building roads, water mains, sewer lines, airports, public buildings and recreational facilities. Later, white-collar positions were added. Nurses, teachers, and artists also found work. In Colorado, a group of musicians formed an orchestra to give benefit concerts. Nurses examined thousands of children in a statewide health program. Twelve artists created paintings for therapeutic use in the treatment of Denver mental patients. Thirty-two CWA workers in twenty-four counties gathered historic data on Colorado pioneers, towns, institutions, and industries. The resulting histories were the first of their kind in the country. This program was so successful that FERA asked to continue it with FERA funds until late 1934, months after all other CWA activities had ended.⁴³ There were also federally sponsored CWA projects; one of the more notable related to the field of historic preservation was the initiation of the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS). Hopkins proposed that the CWA study buildings of historic value and employ 1,200 draftsman for at least two months. These workers would prepare measured drawings, plans, elevations, and details to record the nation's historic landmarks.⁴⁴

The CWA, although intended only as a stop-gap measure to get the country through the winter months when no other large projects would be initiated, still met with criticism. Private employers and unions complained that the CWA wages exceeded the prevailing scale. In Colorado, there were charges of discrimination among Hispanics, who had to prove their citizenship before being hired, something not required of other individuals. However, reviewing its intended goal, the experimental program would seem to have succeeded where all others had failed. In the small towns and outlying areas of Colorado, it almost eliminated unemployment – for a short time, that is. As Mrs. Harlan Fiscus said in a letter to Governor Johnson on February 16, 1935, “Now had it not have been for the lease and royalty money paid into this territory and C.W.A. projects the business men as well as the farmers would be done My husband got two shifts of road work that kept us thru 33-34 winter.”⁴⁵

In spite of its short-lived success in rural areas, the CWA never employed more than one third of those looking for work in the larger cities.⁴⁶ It was also a costly program, spending over \$800 million nationwide in four and a half months. One of the most significant, but intangible, benefits was the psychological effect that working brought to millions of Americans. Many who had lost hope now had faith that they could someday work again.⁴⁷ It was also one of the first New Deal

⁴³Ibid., p. 82.

⁴⁴Schwartz, p. 135.

⁴⁵In Wickens, p. 98.

⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 83-84.

⁴⁷Schwartz, p. 191.

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work programs which worked on public improvement projects, leading the way for the others that would follow. By the time it was terminated on March 31, 1934, the agency nationwide had built or improved 40,000 schools, 3,500 parks or recreational facilities, 500,000 miles of roads, and over 1,000 airports – all in 136 days!⁴⁸

Resettlement Administration

To specifically address rural poverty and agricultural reform, the Resettlement Administration (RA) was created in 1935. Drawing from earlier New Deal programs such as the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) and FERA, the RA assumed responsibility for rehabilitation and land programs. The AAA established a system that made direct payments to farmers and provided for alternative farm staple subsidies. By early 1936, however, when the processing tax for the AAA was ruled unconstitutional, Roosevelt had already moved onto the RA and other rural programs. He appointed Rexford Tugwell as head of the RA, which operated out of the Department of Agriculture. Its purpose was to provide better housing for the poorest farmers in the country, and Tugwell ambitiously planned for the resettlement of 500,000 families. Without the money, and in many cases, the support for such plans, the RA eventually found homes for only 4,441 farm families, most of them in the Midwest and Northeast.⁴⁹ Most of the RA funds were spent on farm rehabilitation, land utilization projects, suburban development, and the establishment of sanitary camps for migrant workers. The RA also assisted poor farmers by providing government-purchased seed and farm machinery for temporary use. The agency encouraged and aided efforts to reclaim eroded land, clean up polluted rivers, and control potential flooding. Like the Farm Credit Administration, it also made loans to farmers who were unable to get credit anywhere else. The farmers not only had to repay the low interest loans, though, they also had to follow federal guidelines for the farm and household operations. The required visits from the Department of Agriculture agents to check up on their operations were universally disliked by rural families.

Another aspect of the RA was its program of buying unproductive farmland, retiring it from production, and reverting it back to grassland or game preserves. Colorado's program of resettlement began in late 1935 and lasted through 1937. The RA recruited destitute eastern Colorado families for resettlement in western Colorado, subsequently purchasing their submarginal farmland totaling over several thousand acres. Several hundred residents were encouraged to move to cooperative villages in more fertile tracts near Grand Junction, Delta, Montrose, and Alamosa counties in western Colorado. The RA provided loans for each family to buy land, livestock, and seed, and also provided them with an adobe stucco house.⁵⁰

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 186.

⁴⁹James Olson, ed., Historical Dictionary of the New Deal (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1985), p. 419.

⁵⁰Wickens, pp. 264-266.

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Figure 5: "Farm abandoned farm because of continuous crop failures. Weld County." Rothstein, Arthur, 1915- photographer. October 1939.
Photo from Farm Security Administration - Office of War Information
Photograph Collection, Library of Congress, fsa 8b18598

When first announced, it was not surprising that many resisted the idea of moving from their land, depopulating their community, and turning as much as two-thirds of some areas in eastern Colorado into public grazing land. A few however, like Mrs. Fiscus, looked forward to a future in a new resettled home.

What is being done with this submarginal land in the New Raymer [northeast Weld county] territory? Everything is a failure. More grew on the idle land than the tilled acres. . . . Hence I for one am for going far to where I can have a H.O.M.E. . . .⁵¹

A surprising proponent for this resettlement was Governor Johnson, considering that he later concluded "As I see it, the New Deal has been the worst fraud ever perpetrated on the American people." Earlier he said:

⁵¹In Wickens, p. 98.

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There is a surprising demand all over the state for these homesteads. I am astonished how perfectly a comprehensive program of this kind fits the Colorado picture. . . . The home owning instinct . . . seems to be strongly implanted in all of our people. The program will cost an immense amount of money- -almost as much as one war. . . but I believe that it will be worth one hundred times the cost.⁵²

The purchases began by the Resettlement Administration in the 1930s in eastern Colorado, and later by its 1937 successor, the Farm Security Administration, would lay the groundwork for the Comanche National Grassland, which now contains more than 600 square miles in Baca, Las Animas, and Otero counties. The Pawnee National Grassland, now comprising more than 300 square miles in Weld county, is another result of the land purchases begun by the RA during the 1930s.

Farm Security Administration

Congress authorized the creation of the Farm Security Administration (FSA) in 1937 to replace the RA. It operated out of the Department of Agriculture under the terms of the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenancy Act. Like its predecessor, the agency was designed to assist the rural poor. Rather than relocating farmers, though, it sought to rehabilitate farmers on existing farms. The FSA sponsored two main programs: the Rural Rehabilitation Program (RRP) and the Farm Debt Adjustment Program (FDAP). The RRP extended loans to farmers to buy essentials, such as food, clothing, seed, feed, and fertilizer, and sometimes equipment, livestock, and land as well. These loans were designed to help farmers not only provide for their families, but to increase their productivity as well. The average FSA loan in 1937 was \$240 per family, and rose to \$600 per family by 1940. FDAP was

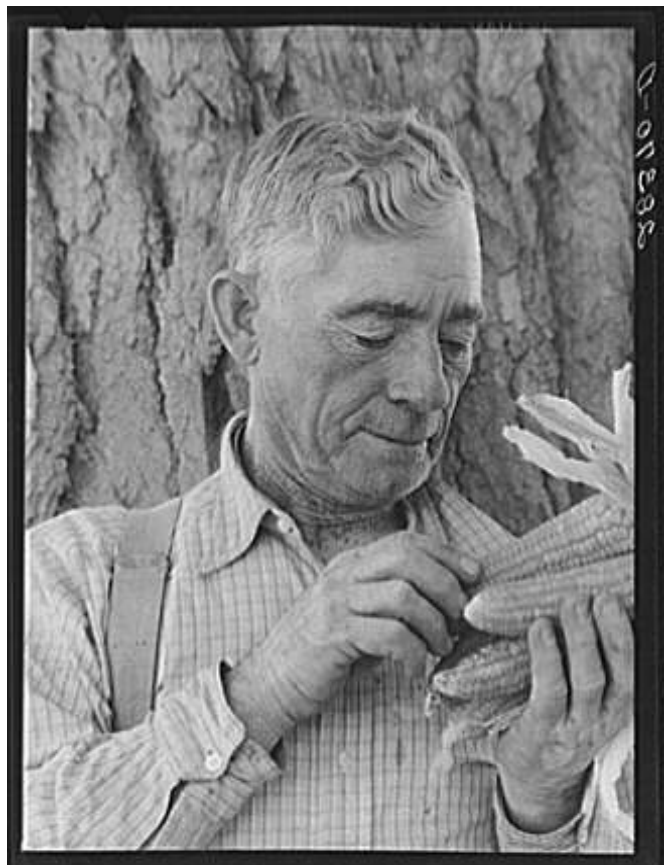


Figure 5: “Andy Bahain, FSA (Farm Security Administration) borrower near Kersey, Colorado.” Rothstein, Arthur, 1915- photographer; Oct 1939. Photo from Farm Security Administration - Office of War Information Photograph Collection, Library of Congress, fsa 8b18580.

⁵²Ibid., p. 96.

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designed to help debt-burdened farmers adjust their cost of operations. By bringing farmers and their creditors together, this program worked to extend and refinance obligations, occasionally even making loans to assist this process. By early 1944, FDAP had completed 187,282 cases of debt adjustment nationwide.⁵³

One of the more memorable divisions of the FSA was the special photographic section. It began under the auspices of the RA, and employed Roy Emerson Stryker as its head. Lasting from 1935 through 1942, Stryker was appointed to organize a photographic collection of the FSA work. To carry out this assignment, he employed a small group of photographers that included Esther Bubley, Marjory Collins, Mary Post Wolcott, Arthur Rothstein, Walker Evans, Russell Lee, Jack Delano, Gordon Parks, Charlotte Brooks, John Vachon, Carl Mydans, Dorothea Lange and Ben Shahn. Their work provides some of the most powerful and lasting images of the effects of the Depression and the New Deal on rural families.

Rural Electrification Administration

The Roosevelt administration established the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) established on May 11, 1935. The REA's goal was to provide farms and rural areas with inexpensive electric power. Although viewed primarily for its role changing the lives of rural Americans, it was also conceived as a work relief program. Through the construction of electric lines, the REA was intended to provide jobs, and like the PWA, pump funds into the economy through its demands for materials. A lack of sufficient funds to actually undertake this program resulted in the REA becoming an independent agency which provided loans to rural residents who were to organize electric cooperatives. It was later reorganized in 1939 as a division of the Department of Agriculture.

In the early 1930s, the United States could almost be characterized as two nations: one of urban dwellers and the other of rural residents. The latter group toiled in nineteenth-century conditions. Farm wives in particular, suffered from the lack of electricity, handling all their farm chores and housework with no refrigerators, vacuum cleaners or washing machines. In 1935, only one out of nine farm homes in Colorado had electricity. Private companies had no intention of expanding into rural areas due to the cost of extending lines into rural areas, and in fact, often fought attempts by the REA to establish power in those areas that were without. Nonetheless, through the REA's long-term, self-liquidating loans to state and local governments, to farmers' cooperatives, and to nonprofit organizations, by 1940 one in four Colorado farm homes had power. By 1950, that ratio increased to nine out of ten.⁵⁴

⁵³Olson, p. 166.

⁵⁴Wickens, pp. 270-271.

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Colorado's Eastern Plains**National Youth Administration**

Roosevelt created the National Youth Administration (NYA) in 1935 after lobbying by his wife, Eleanor, called for a program designed to assist the nation's youth. Authorized under the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1935, Aubrey Williams initially administered the NYA. Because Williams was second in command at the WPA, he actually had little time to devote to the NYA. Among the deputy directors who actually ran the agency during Williams's tenure was Colorado's Josephine Roche, Denver's first policewoman. When Williams resigned after a few months, he was succeeded by another Coloradan, Richard R. Brown. Brown's administrative assistant was Mabel Cory Costigan, wife of Colorado's then ex-senator Edward Costigan. After two years as the NYA executive director, Brown resigned and yet another Coloradan took over, Oren H. Lull.⁵⁵

The goal of the NYA was to provide work relief and employment programs for 16 to 25 year old students or unemployed high school graduates and drop-outs. Part-time work was provided for students, both high school and college, in order to encourage them to remain in school. Students were given work which provided them with practical experience and training. This sometimes included clerical or even construction jobs, but many found positions related to their field of study. Colorado's NYA program employed about 2,000 students per year, men and women in equal proportions. The jobs could range from NYA sponsored projects to ones that were co-sponsored by local public agencies. Initially, the largest proportion of jobs was on construction jobs that required unskilled labor. These included repairing roads, improving public grounds, and helping with other public construction projects. Later jobs included vocational training and service projects.⁵⁶

Both the national and state NYA programs recognized the special needs of the rural counties in eastern Colorado. Of children forced to leave school in Colorado during the Depression, two-thirds of them lived in rural areas. At the federal level, the NYA set aside special funds for drought-stricken states; thus in addition to its regular allotment, the NYA program in Colorado was able to take advantage of an additional \$45,000 by late 1937. Although the need for a youth program was the greatest in rural Colorado, most of the NYA programs were better suited for urban areas. Colorado's NYA tried to combat this issue by establishing an agricultural program in 1936. Over 100 rural youths were put to work, some on demonstration farms, and others working in local county extension agencies.⁵⁷

⁵⁵Wickens, pp. 314-315.

⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 318-323.

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 318, 325-326.

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In 1941, as the nation geared up for war, Congress drastically cut the NYA budget. In Colorado, all projects not contributing to the defense effort were cut, and new defense work was initiated. When Congress finally eliminated the NYA in 1943, the Colorado agency donated all its equipment to schools and vocational training centers across the state. The NYA spent over \$6.5 million during its eight years of operation in Colorado, one-third for school aid programs and the remaining for out-of-school work. Nearly one-fifth of Colorado students who sought work relief during the Depression found assistance through the NYA.

II. *The CCC and the SCS in Eastern Colorado: 1935-1942*

“Save the soil, save the forests, save the young men”

Two of the nation's greatest needs during the Depression years – the conservation of the nation's natural resources and employment for inexperienced youth – were joined in Roosevelt's first New Deal work program. As a work relief program, its initial goal was obviously to provide employment. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in its first year would take 300,000 young men off the streets. Providing jobs for unemployed young men was not the sole reason for initiating this experimental work program, however. Roosevelt also felt passionately about conservation, and this program combined both of these objectives: putting people to work on public federal lands in order to preserve the nation's great natural resources.

Just a few weeks after Roosevelt's inauguration, Congress passed the Emergency Conservation Work (ECW) Act, which authorized the President to establish the Corps. The program was officially known as the ECW until 1937, when its name was changed to the Civilian Conservation Corps (which had been its popular moniker for the previous four years.) By early July 1933, only three months after the first enrollee, there were 250,000 enrollees at 1,468 camps, with camps located in every state. It was the largest and most rapid mobilization of men ever witnessed in this country to date, even in wartime.⁵⁸ By May 1933, about 8,500 men were enrolling daily.

The program differed from other New Deal agencies in that although it existed as a separate agency, it operated through the cooperation of four federal departments: War, Labor, Agriculture, and Interior. This organization might seem chaotic, but in reality, each department successfully delegated its role. The Department of Labor directed the enrollee selection, while the War Department ran the camps. This included not only the building of the camps, but

⁵⁸Robert Fechner, “Objectives and Results of the Civilian Conservation Corps Program.” (n.p.: Washington, D.C., 1938), p. 7; John A. Salmond, The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1967), p. 45.

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providing food, clothing, medical care, and transportation. The Departments of Agriculture and Interior planned the projects and provided technical expertise. The Interior Department supervised the work in the national and (later) state and local parks. It also provided the educational programming at the camps. The Agriculture Department oversaw the projects dealing with soil conservation, reclamation, wildlife protection, as well as the work supervised by the U.S. Forest Service. There was an Office of the Director of the CCC, but it was limited in size and scope; its role was mainly to coordinate the efforts of the four co-operating federal departments.

The two largest agencies in the Department of Agriculture that provided technical assistance to the CCC were the Forest Service and the Soil Conservation Service. In fact, the CCC was so closely associated in popular thought with the Forest Service that it was nicknamed "Roosevelt's Tree Army." Seventy-five percent of Corps camps were located on projects administered by the Department of Agriculture, and more than half of those were employed in national, state, or private forests. There were two broad categories of work completed by the Forest Service camps – forest protection and forest improvement. Forest protection included fighting fires in addition to preventing them. Colorado's large holdings in federal and state forest lands correlated to a correspondingly high number of CCC camps assigned to the Forest Service.

After the Forest Service, the Soil Conservation Service in the Department of Agriculture had the most camps nationwide. As an indication of the severity of the soil erosion problem in Colorado, the SCS camps eventually outnumbered the Forest Service camps in the state. Beginning in 1934 with only twenty-two camps nationwide, the Corps worked with the SCS to execute a national soil conservation and erosion program. The program was so successful that the number of CCC camps assigned to the SCS grew to a high of 501 in 1936. The SCS Corps camps started with demonstration projects utilizing approved practical methods of soil conservation to farmers, but eventually grew to include actual work on private land in cooperation with landowners, as well as the development and improvement of erosion control techniques through research. Among the practices demonstrated by the CCC were the checking and healing of gullied areas, contour tree planting, fence construction to permit contour cultivation, control grazing or to give protection to treated areas, and contour tree planting. Contour farming, strip cropping, crop rotation, and permanent retirement of critical slopes from cultivation were other erosion control devices initiated. The built resources resulting from these techniques included check dams; contour ditches; gully outlets; infilled gullies; contour furrows; pasture terraces; contour listings; and tree belts or breaks. Broad-based terraces were constructed on steeper slopes to prevent water erosion. In order to carry out this work, engineering and surveying skills were necessary, and enrollees were given instruction in these fields. If the men did not return to farming after their term of service was up, they had been given other work skills they could take out into the job force with them after they left.

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The projects carried out by the National Parks and Monuments Division in the Department of the Interior are some of the most recognized CCC work in Colorado today. This division not only supervised CCC projects in the national parks, but also in state parks and sometimes local park land. Projects included building campgrounds, picnic areas, natural trails, parking areas, and opening new park sections. The Corps also built bridges, installed telephone lines, outdoor fireplaces, picnic tables, and roads, just like their counterparts assigned to the Forest Service. In Colorado, these camps were primarily situated in the Front Range or mountainous counties.

In western Colorado, the Bureau of Reclamation supervised the rehabilitation of existing storage and irrigation systems, developed supplemental storage facilities in drought areas, and constructed recreational facilities at irrigation reservoirs. Also in the western part of the state, the U.S. Division of Grazing in the Department of the Interior used the CCC to initiate and implement the recently passed Taylor Grazing Act (1932) in order to stop injury to the public grazing lands that had occurred through erosion and mismanagement. Camps assigned to this division in Colorado worked on lands in the public domain, including national forest lands. CCC projects included erosion control, re-vegetation, rodent control, eradicating poisonous weeds, and water conservation through the construction of tanks, stock reservoirs, and wells. Stock control was aided by the construction of fences, corrals, and trails.⁵⁹

The Department of the Interior also administered the Indian Civilian Conservation Corps. Native Americans suffered as much, if not more, than the rest of the nation from the prolonged economic depression and the droughts on the Great Plains and Southwest regions. Unlike other CCC enrollees, Indians remained on their own reservations and worked on the conservation and protection of their own lands and homes. Reservation projects included water development, prevention of soil erosion, telephone lines to aid in fire protection, firebreaks, truck and horse trails, bridges, fences, insect and pest control, and the rounding up of "non-productive" range stock in order to reduce numbers to proper stock capacity.

As noted, the enrollees were selected by the Department of Labor, which cooperated with relief and welfare agencies in each state and local community in the selection process. In Colorado, the Colorado State Relief Committee (later known as the Colorado State Relief Administration) was the first agency to direct the enrollment of Colorado youth in the CCC. For a six month period in 1936, the Colorado Works Progress Administration took over these responsibilities. In July 1936, the Colorado State Department of Public Welfare began the job of coordinating the

⁵⁹Colorado State Department of Public Welfare. "The CCC Selection Division: Range Rehabilitation on the Public Domain," p. 23, at Denver, CO: Colorado Archives; Box #13786.

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CCC enrollment statewide.⁶⁰ The statewide agencies also looked to the local relief agencies in counties and cities for assistance in selecting enrollees.

The CCC's primary goal was to provide work and income to needy families, and it succeeded from the outset. Each enrollee sent home \$25 a month to his family. The CCC men reaped benefits in many other areas besides financial. Virtually all gained weight from result of good food, regular hours, and hard work. Education programs set up at the camps provided useful instruction and job training. Less tangible, but no less significant, was the hope that CCC work gave to many of these men – a true feeling of pride with the ability to help their families in desperate times. Many men saw their time in the Corps as a turning point in their lives.

Securing a CCC camp was an important economic boost for a local community as well. Camp construction required materials and provided work for local labor. Furthermore, it was estimated that nearly \$5,000 was spent each month in the local market for food. The \$5 per month that enrollees were allowed to keep was usually all spent in the local community. Salaries for local citizens in supporting positions also helped boost the economy. More importantly, by protecting natural resources, the CCC projects that were completed in the area had a positive effect on the local economy in the long run as well, either by improving farming techniques, working on soil or water conservation, forest improvement, or developing recreational facilities. With all of the tangible benefits from the CCC, the program was consistently regarded with favor throughout the entire New Deal era. Politicians were inundated with requests from communities hoping to secure a CCC camp, and towns that already had camps hoped they would become permanent features. On May 10, 1935, the Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes received no less than twenty-six telegrams from the businessmen of Greeley protesting the removal of a national parks camp there, even though the work project was finished.⁶¹

The first significant expansion of CCC enrollment nationwide occurred in mid-1934, in part as a response to the drought that was devastating much of the Midwest and southern Plains. With a need for immediate government action in this area, both to alleviate the physical devastation of the drought and to relieve the increased regional unemployment situation, Roosevelt decided to use the CCC to help with an overall drought policy. He asked Congress for an additional \$50,000,000 for Corps work in the affected areas, principally to check soil erosion and to develop irrigation schemes. The quality of the work in the drought areas only increased the

⁶⁰“The Civilian Conservation Corps in Colorado,” < www.colorado.gov/dpa/doit/archives/cc/ccscope.html>, accessed 2/11/2004.

⁶¹In Salmond, p. 110, from “Communications from Greeley, Colo., to Ickes,” (Secretary of Interior, Records, May 1935).

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already favorable public image of the CCC, with approval crossing party lines.⁶² With so much favorable sentiment, the program did not face opposition when the administration forwarded yet another request to expand the Corps in 1935. This expansion increased the total number of enrollees in the CCC to 600,000, and extended the maximum age limit to 28 and reduced the minimum age to 17. A new legislative act in June 1936 extended the life of the Corps for another three years, and set up the program as an independent agency known as the Civilian Conservation Corps.⁶³

In spite of its popularity and talks of permanence, the CCC did not continue its expansion. By September 1935, the quota of 600,000 enrollees was not met, in part due to the creation of the National Youth Administration. The NYA provided unemployed youths with an alternative to the CCC. Consequently, some camps had been built and projects planned without the manpower to complete them. The September 1935 enrollment figure of more than 500,000 was, in fact, to be the high point in the Corps history. Influenced by an upcoming election and a desire to reduce the budget, President Roosevelt had visions of a progressive shutdown, even though he also hoped to make the CCC a permanent federal agency on a smaller scale. As news of the plans to scale back leaked out, there were protests from across the country, particularly in the drought areas. Even Republican newspapers and politicians across the country supported the CCC. Only the Socialist party wanted it abolished.⁶⁴ The protests did not halt the cut-backs; the CCC lost 489 camps as of January 1, 1936. Roosevelt wanted further reductions but when congressmen of both parties revolted, the administration was forced to compromise. From this point until the program's termination, camps would only be closed when the projects were completed.⁶⁵

Desertion rates among enrollees began to grow in 1939, when almost one out of five discharges left illegally. In part, this was attributed to the improving job situation, but it also signaled the impact of the increasing military build-up. With the situation overseas worsening, the Corps began to be viewed as pre-military training. Certainly, the Army was experienced in taking raw youth and getting them in good physical shape and accustomed to a daily routine. When the relief aspect of the CCC became less important, Roosevelt again tried to cut the Corps enrollees and camps. He was overturned, primarily by Republican votes, in the fiscal year 1940-1941. Enrollment continued to drop as the country geared up for war, however. When the Joint

⁶²Salmond, p. 56.

⁶³Fechner, p. 12.

⁶⁴Salmond, p. 69.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 66-67.

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Committee of Congress met to review the Appropriations Bill of 1941-1942, it recommended the elimination of all programs not considered essential to the war effort; the CCC was on the list. On June 5, 1942, the House voted by a slim margin to liquidate the Corps. Still reluctant to eliminate such a successful and popular program, the Senate tied in its first round of voting. They later receded their action and the Civilian Conservation Corps program was terminated.

The Civilian Conservation Corps has been described as “experimental, anti-ideological, essentially pragmatic, and, above all, humanitarian.” While these may have reflected the ideals on which all New Deal programs were based, these terms were especially true of the CCC.⁶⁶ The program provided significant benefits to the health, education, and employment expectancies of almost three million young Americans, as well as immediate financial aid to their families. It appealed to the agrarian myth of the country’s founding by introducing city boys to rural life and hard work. Rural youth benefited as well, by broadening their horizons by meeting other types of people. The CCC not only worked on programs to conserve natural resources, it also awakened the nation to the fact that its natural resources were being destroyed faster than they could be replenished. In terms of social welfare, the Corps served as a precursor for other work relief and youth programs during the New Deal era and beyond, including the WPA, NYA, and later the Job Corps. Although many Americans, including President Roosevelt, had hoped for it to become a permanent program, part of its downfall was that there was no federal department to champion its cause. The Army, for example, always saw its role in the CCC as temporary, and most certainly secondary to war efforts. Nonetheless, the Civilian Conservation Corps made vital contributions to the conservation of natural resources, had a lasting effect on its enrollees, and helped to provide relief to a nation crippled by unemployment.

The Civilian Conservation Corps clearly accomplished its two primary goals through its Colorado camps: it brought real economic relief to the state, and it also helped conserve the state’s natural resources. Few states had greater involvement with the CCC than Colorado. With the large number of federally owned forest lands, national parks, and the desperate situation of the Dust Bowl counties in Colorado, the state was assigned a disproportionately high number of camps. Not only was the total number of camps high, but Colorado did not experience a wide fluctuation in the average number of camps placed in the state over the years, as did some other states.⁶⁷ This provided more economic stability for not only the enrollees, but for the communities which benefited from a nearby camp. After the formal establishment of the Civilian Conservation Corps in the state in spring 1933, between thirty to thirty-five camps were

⁶⁶Salmond, p. 220.

⁶⁷Leonard Pinto, “The CCC in Colorado – The Enrichment of Social Life: The Gift of a People to Themselves,” in Thomas Lyons, Ed., 1930 Employment 1980: Humanistic Perspectives on the Civilian Conservation Corps in Colorado, (Boulder : Colorado Division of Employment & Training, 1981) p. 114.

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authorized for the "Colorado district." Twenty-nine camps were actually established by summer 1933, and by the fall, eight of those were year-round camps. Nineteen year-round camps were added in 1934-35. When the program expanded in 1936, the total number of Colorado camps increased to forty-seven, and during its last complete year of existence in 1942, there were forty-two Colorado camps. There were a total of 172 CCC camps established in Colorado between 1933 and 1942, when the program was terminated.⁶⁸

The CCC and the SCS – working together in eastern Colorado

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, most Americans considered wind erosion to be an act of God requiring toleration. The 1930s, however, forced Colorado plains' residents to face a new realization about their natural resources – that "A nation that destroys its soils destroys itself."⁶⁹ However, a movement towards scientific soil conservation actually began in the decade prior to the Dust Bowl era. Hugh H. Bennett, the "father of soil conservation," led a movement in the United States in the 1920s and 1930s to address the "national menace" of soil erosion. He worked on the development of scientific soil conservation methods, and helped establish the Soil Erosion Service in the Department of the Interior, becoming its first director in September 1933. The Soil Erosion Service was reorganized as the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) under the Department of Agriculture in 1935. The original goal of the SCS was to help farmers turn the Dust Bowl back into grasslands by managing the soil to minimize water and wind erosion. Soon those efforts changed to minimizing erosion to increase land productivity instead. The SCS helped farmers learn new methods to work the soil through terracing, contour plowing, and emergency listing (a means of plowing) in order to slow soil erosion on susceptible lands. The SCS worked closely with various New Deal work relief agencies to accomplish some of its goals, including the CCC in developing soil demonstration farms across the southern plains in order to promote these new methods.

As noted, Colorado had a high number of CCC camps when compared to its population. This was due primarily to the geographic characteristics of the state. The large number of Forest Service and National Park sites obviously contributed to this number. Colorado was also one of the few states that had projects related to grazing land; these camps were located in the western portion of the state. However, Colorado also had a proportionately high number of camps assigned to the Soil Conservation Service. While these camps were scattered across the state, several were in the sparsely populated counties of eastern Colorado. In part, the high number of SCS camps reflects the dire conditions found in the Dust Bowl and the severity of the soil

⁶⁸Parham, p. 10.; Michael McCarthy, "History of the CCC in Colorado;" in Lyons, p. 4.

⁶⁹Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Letter to all State Governors on a Uniform Soil Conservation Law" (February 26, 1937).

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erosion found in the plains region of Colorado. However, soil erosion conditions alone were not enough to guarantee a CCC camp assigned to the SCS. The number of camps assigned to eastern Colorado is also due to the successful efforts of the Soil Conservation Service to encourage farmers to organize Soil Conservation Districts. CCC camps that were supervised by the SCS were only placed in areas of states that had soil district agreements. If farmers in an area agreed to participate, the likelihood of securing a CCC camp was much greater. After the Colorado State Legislature passed a Soil Conservation Law in 1937, which provided the authority for the organization of such locally-controlled districts, three out of the first four districts established were in eastern Colorado: one in Kit Carson County and two in Baca County.

CCC camps assigned to the SCS were desirable because these camps tended to be more stable or permanent.⁷⁰ The soil erosion problems were so severe that the projects were considered ongoing, and did not typically have projected completion dates. The first four SCS supervised camps in the eastern plains, all established at the same time, were: SCS-5-C in Springfield; SCS-4-C in Cheyenne Wells; SCS-3-C in Hugo, and the Greeley Armory. Enrollees who lived in eastern Colorado were sent to these camps, as well as to the front range camps at Fitzsimons, Colorado Springs, and Pueblo.⁷¹ Other SCS supervised camps were later established in Elbert, Kutch, and Sterling in eastern Colorado. By 1939, the number of SCS camps throughout the entire state outnumbered the Forest Service camps in spite of the vast acreage under the control of the latter agency. Although not all of the SCS camps were in eastern Colorado, this nonetheless indicates the continuing drought and erosion problem that plagued the state. Of the 8,400 enrollees in the state, 2,400 were working on erosion control. It is interesting to note that only 2,600 of the total enrollees were from Colorado, another indication of the significance assigned by the federal government to the conservation of the state's natural resources.

The amount of work produced by the SCS camps in Colorado was formidable, but when compared against *all* the other states, it is almost staggering. Over half of all the terrace water spreaders constructed by the CCC in the United States were built in Colorado. Approximately 85% of the land treated for insect control in 1939 nationwide was in Colorado.⁷² The work output at the individual camps in eastern Colorado was also quite impressive. In a three year period, camp SCS-5-C in Springfield constructed 145 earth dams (check and impounding), 143.1 miles of terraces, 1,683.8 miles of contour furrows, 7,861 acres of range revegetation, 35.1 miles of fences, and planted 45,731 trees. A total of 22,393 acres were under forty-six cooperative

⁷⁰Pinto, pp. 117-118.

⁷¹“Civilian Conservation Corps: Enrolling Points – April Enrollment, 1936.” At Denver, CO: Colorado State Archives, Box #13789.

⁷²Pinto, pp. 126-127, 130. Note: insect control also included Forest Service work.

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agreements with local land owners.⁷³ The camp in Hugo had just as impressive work statistics. During the same three year period, the enrollees completed work on 125,000 acres of land, more than any other SCS camp in Colorado. This included 155 miles of fence, 2,725 miles of contour furrows, 175 permanent dams, 36,500 yards of diversion ditch, 3,425 tons of rock quarried, 125,000 trees planted, and 36,000 pounds of grass seed planted. They also hauled nearly 5 million pounds of poison and traveled 53,700 miles in two seasons working on the grasshopper plague.⁷⁴

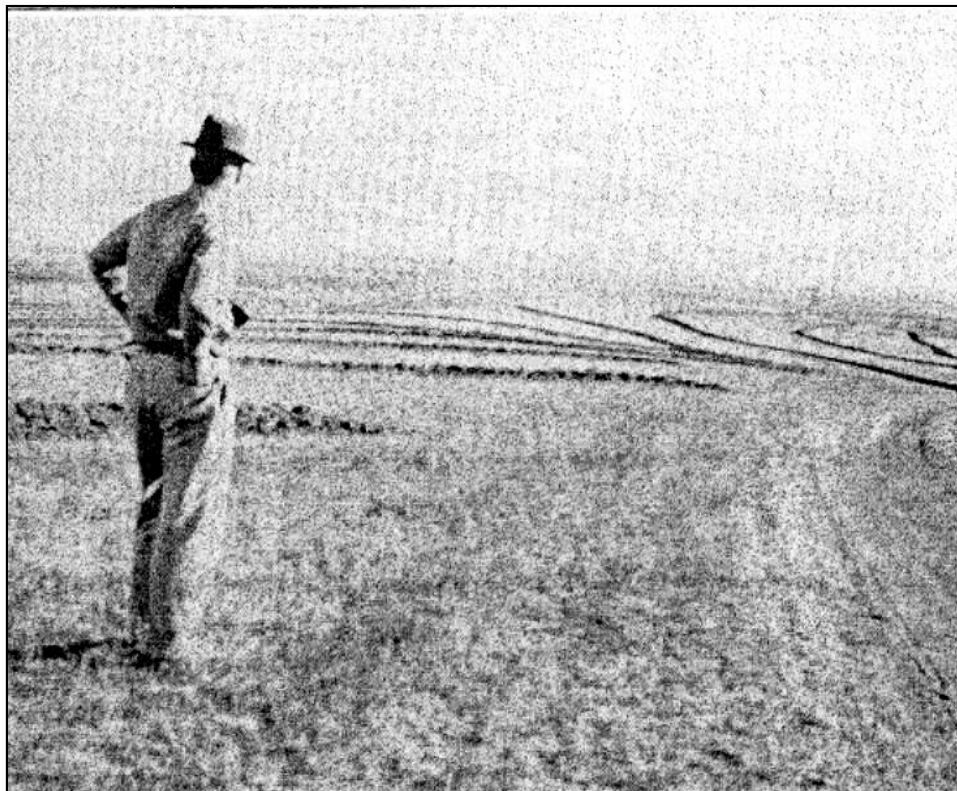


Figure 7: Inspecting soil conservation work completed by the CCC camp in Hugo. Photo from "History of CCC in Colorado," (Summer 1938), p. 56. Box #13789, Colorado State Archives.

⁷³"History of Civilian Conservation Corps: Colorado-Wyoming District," (Summer, 1938), pp. 43-44. At Denver, CO: Colorado State Archives, Box #13789.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 50.

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Although the camps were proud of their soil conservation work, the tedious nature is reflected in a poem appearing in the CCC camp newsletter for the company stationed in Springfield, Colorado, entitled "Hitch in Hell."

I've dug a million ditches and cleaned ten miles of ground.
And a nearer place this side of hell is waiting to be found.
But there is some consolation, gather closer while I tell.
When we die we'll go to heaven, for we've done our stretch in hell . . .

We've built a million contours, we've walked thru miles of mud.
We've cleaned a million mess kits, and peeled a million spuds.
We've shoveled tons of gravel, a million rocks we've lugged.
But there will be no rocks in Heaven, for we've packed them all in hell. . . .

It's then we'll hear old St. Peter greet us loudly with his yell.
Take these front seats, CCC boys, for you've done your hitch in hell.⁷⁵

A slightly more idyllic view of life in the CCC was presented in nationwide recruitment pamphlets to the general public. The Corps was promoted as offering "an opportunity for work for 6 month's period at wholesome, healthful, outdoor work." Employment with the Corps would also rejuvenate a young man's mind and spirit along with his physical strength.⁷⁶ Combined with a chance to work in beautiful Colorado – what more could a young man ask for? In fact, when new recruits from other states would arrive in the "middle of nowhere" to the Dust Bowl counties in eastern Colorado, it was a shock for which many were completely unprepared. Southern men transferred into the Rocky Mountain National Park camp may have been unprepared for the cold weather, but the setting was nonetheless scenic. The same could not be said for the camps in eastern Colorado. All CCC camps were Spartan, with the enrollees housed in either tents or army barracks. The barren dust bowl settings of camps in Cheyenne Wells, Hugo, and Springfield, though, were not what many of these young men had envisioned when they heard they would be going to Colorado. The memories of the new enrollees from northern Oklahoma as they came into the Camp SCS-5-C in Springfield were recorded in the camp newsletter *Gusts O' Dust*:

The long tiresome ride to Springfield was a kaleidoscopic sequence . . . green fields fading as the train flew westward into the brown barrenness of the Dust

⁷⁵"Gusts O' Dust," (1 August 1936); at Denver, CO: Colorado State Archives, Box #20561.

⁷⁶U.S. Department of Labor. "Handbook for Agencies Selecting Men for the Civilian Conservation Corps. U.S. Department of Labor, Washington, D.C. 1933a.

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Bowl, conjecture and hope against hope that the company would be sent into the mountains instead of the "Bowl," . . . the "devil twisters" winding across the plateaus and finally the arrival in Springfield, to be greeted by blaring auto horns. Immediately upon getting off . . . the brand new company . . . dubiously surveyed the desert that it was to call home.⁷⁷

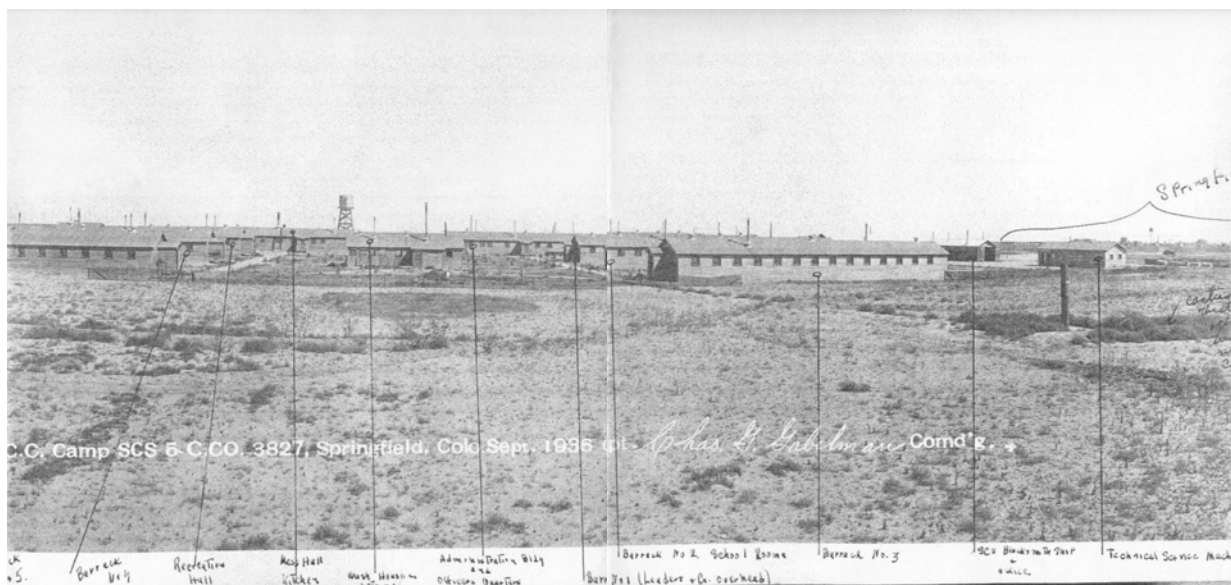


Figure 8: The terrain of the CCC camp in Springfield came as a shock to many of the new recruits upon arrival. Photo: "Civilian Conservation Corps Collection," (Denver: Colorado State Archives, Box #60041).

The Oklahoma boys that arrived at the Hugo camp in August 1935 had an even harder time adjusting. To them, the "depressing effect was the change from the hills and trees of LeFlore County, Oklahoma to the treeless prairies of Lincoln County. . . . The men finally became accustomed to the chilly nights and mornings, but to the absence of trees—no, not ever."⁷⁸

After the first two months, seventy-five men left the Hugo camp because they were homesick and despairing of ". . . too much prairie, too few trees, too far from home!"⁷⁹ To help prevent desertion, an unusual program was instituted through the Denver Department of Public Welfare.

⁷⁷"Organization Day, Company 3827: July 1935-July 1936," "Gusts O' Dust" (1 August 1936), p. 2.

⁷⁸"History of CCC," (Summer 1936), p. 55.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 56.

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Enrollees from Hugo dramatized a typical day in the CCC camp in order to let the boys know in advance what they might face at a camp in eastern Colorado.⁸⁰

Enrollees that were able to “stick it out” in such bleak conditions lived up to the CCC’s motto of “We can take it!” The men of Company 3827 at Camp SCS-5-C in Springfield, known as the “Foreign Legion” camp, felt a special camaraderie in surviving the Dust Bowl conditions.

Camp SCS-5-C enjoys (?) the unique distinction of being [located] in the approximate center of the Colorado Dust Bowl and gradually because of its unique remoteness and the at times undesirable location the personnel and company members have come to be known through out the District as the Foreign Legion of the C’s and it is a well merited distinction for it takes a fellow who is made of pretty sturdy stuff to carry on, griping perhaps, but never-the less carrying on, when the flying silt is so thick that he can’t see his mate a few feet down the contour, when he eats food that is gritty with dust and wages a futile but never ending battle against dusty blankets with extra duty as the infallible penalty for not having shaken them enough. . . . Someday it is going to be worth something to be able to say, “I could take it and did take it in the Dust Bowl and the Foreign Legion.”⁸¹

Camp SCS-5-C was established as a permanent Soil Conservation Service camp on July 25, 1935. Due to the constant winds and dust storms, standard equipment for the enrollees included respirators and goggles. In order to carry out their conservation work assignments, however, the cooperation of the local farmers and land owners was required. Much of the land around the camp was completely barren before the CCC demonstration projects started. After three years of CCC work in the area surrounding Springfield, though, many of the barren fields had at least some type of cover, from weeds to grass. Dust storms were reduced, and some fields were even able to produce some type of crop, such as broom corn, maize, sudan grass, wheat, beans, and alfalfa.⁸²

Springfield enjoyed the economic boost of having a CCC camp nearby. Not only did local establishments experience an upswing in business, but sixteen “local experienced men” also got jobs working at the camp. The important conservation work was also recognized by the citizens. The local SCS office and CCC enrollees gave tours of their projects to help educate farmers about the benefits of wind and water erosion control methods. CCC camps usually participated in many community affairs as well, such as attending local dances and marching in parades.

⁸⁰Parham, p. 39.

⁸¹“Gusts O’ Dust,” p. 9.

⁸²“History of CCC,” (Summer, 1938), pp. 43-44.

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SCS-5-C camp reciprocated the good will that Springfield residents showed them by helping search seventeen hours for a child lost in one of the worst dust storms of 1936. They also aided in a search for the bodies of a family drowned in Two Buttes Creek. On a lighter note, the camp offered entertainment by its Dramatic Club, and the camp "Dusters" teams participated in basketball and baseball games against town teams as well as other CCC camps.

Despite their complaints about the camp location and their work on the "endless miles and miles of contours which now twist and squirm about in every conceivable direction across this section of the Dust Bowl," the men tried to make the camp on the edge of Springfield more hospitable. New enrollees were set to work "spading up the damp area and planting flowers and grass. The tree sprouts which were planted, thrived due to the continual soakings by EDMs and helped relieve the monotony of brown dirt and tumbleweed stubble."⁸³ Enrollees at the Cheyenne Wells camp improved the appearance of their campsite by constructing impressive stone pillars to mark the entrance.

Although the purpose of the camps was to provide work for unemployed young men by performing conservation services, the training that each man received was nearly as important. In the case of the SCS camps, it was hoped that some of the rural boys would take back with them the new farming techniques and apply them in their own agricultural pursuits, thus furthering the policy of soil conservation after they left the camp. Of course, not all the enrollees were from rural areas. The camps also offered vocational courses and job training. The commander of the Hugo camp was formerly a reporter, and several of the men who worked on the camp newspaper, the *Dam An' Furrow*, received training in writing and journalism. The *Dam An' Furrow* was recognized as the second best camp newspaper in the nation in an issue of *Happy Days*, the national CCC paper.

As one historian noted, the CCC camps in "Colorado's desolate eastern plains":

in many respects . . . faced the biggest challenge of all. Situated in the midst of the barren Dust Bowl, coping daily with the deadly "Black roller" dust storms that raged for miles and as high as 23,000 feet, the best they could hope to do was achieve a holding action against nature.⁸⁴

In fact, they did much more. The Civilian Conservation Corps, under the guidance of the Soil Conservation Service, significantly implemented the nation's, as well as Colorado's, soil conservation program. Eastern Colorado eventually reaped the rewards for establishing sound soil and water conservation methods with the restoration of fertility to their agricultural land.

⁸³Gusts O' Dust, p. 5.

⁸⁴McCarthy, p. 12.

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The Corps pumped more than \$56 million into Colorado's depressed economy. Although the communities with camps prospered the most, thousands of Coloradans received financial assistance through the allotments. The families of the local boys enrolled benefited immensely from the money that was sent back home; many could not have made it through the Depression without it. During its ten years of existence in Colorado, 32,000 men were employed, with approximately 4,000 local boys participating in the CCC each year. Increased local business was another important benefit to the communities with camps nearby, as well as a decrease in local unemployment. Hundreds of local citizens worked in various capacities in the camps.

The "Boys in Khaki" performed unglorified tasks in eastern Colorado – they dug ditches, built fences, quarried and hauled rock, built soil terraces and contours, and fought grasshoppers. They also lived side-by-side with local citizens through some of the most desperate times the region had faced. Even though the camps in eastern Colorado suffered from the highest desertion rates, many of the young men eventually grew to appreciate the plains region. "They soon discovered a fascination in their prairies that can be found nowhere except in the wide open spaces."⁸⁵ The effects of their work were not always immediate, but eventually the CCC's boys were able to write of "the green of growing grass and the shimmer of glistening water, proclaiming progress toward victory."⁸⁶

IV. PWA – Building a framework for Eastern Colorado: 1933-1942

Established in June 1933, the Public Works Administration was among the economic relief programs established in Roosevelt's First Hundred Days. The purpose of the agency was to "prepare a comprehensive program of public works," and through such a program, "to create employment and aid industry by the construction of useful public works of enduring social value."⁸⁷ Although this latter objective states that the program intended to create employment for workers in the building trades and in the construction supplies industries, it was not planned as a direct unemployment relief program. Instead its goal was to "prime the pump" of industry by placing large sums of money in circulation and by creating a demand for construction materials for huge public works projects.⁸⁸ Actual construction was carried out by contracted firms, who were not required to hire unemployed from the relief rolls. Furthermore, PWA-funded construction jobs usually lasted only during the warm weather construction season, about

⁸⁵"History of CCC," (Summer, 1938), p. 58.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 50.

⁸⁷Harold L. Ickes, Administrator, "The Story of PWA: Building for Recovery," (Washington, U.S. Govt. Printing Office, 1939), p. 1.

⁸⁸Jack F. Isakoff, "The Public Works Administration," in Illinois Studies in the Social Sciences, Vol. XXII (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois, 1938.) p. 137.

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six months a year. Finally, the meticulous planning required for project approval by its administrator, Interior Secretary Harold Ickes, resulted in a long delay before PWA proposals progressed from the drawing boards into actual construction. Therefore, the program had little impact on reducing the numbers of unemployed, particularly in the early months of its existence.

The PWA funded both federal and non-federal projects. Federal projects were fully funded by PWA appropriations. Non-federal projects could be proposed by states, local governments, or public departments by submitting an application with plans and construction data. The PWA initially gave grants of 35 percent of a non-federal project's cost, but later raised that amount to 45 percent. The locality could then borrow the remainder of the project cost from the PWA. The projects were intended to be "self-liquidating" in that they eventually paid for themselves. Types of local projects included the construction of streets and highways; sewers, waterworks, and power facilities; educational buildings, courthouses, city halls, armories, hospitals, penal institutions, social/recreational buildings, residential and housing buildings, offices, and warehouses; flood control, water power and reclamation; water navigation aids, such as dams, channels, and canals; aviation; recreational; railroad projects; and engineering structures such as bridges, wharves, piers, subways and tunnels. Federal projects included construction of naval and coast guard vessels; flood control work; air force landing fields; irrigation projects, Federal buildings (including Post Offices); federal penitentiaries; agricultural experiment stations; and Indian reservation improvements.⁸⁹ The only projects that the PWA actually built itself were housing projects; there were none of these in Colorado.

The PWA was the primary public works funding program until the approval of the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1935. Not only was the PWA extended through 1937 at this point, but a number of new agencies were also created, including the Works Progress Administration (WPA). With two possible funding sources available for the construction of public facilities, there was some confusion as to the distinction between the projects assigned to the PWA and those to the WPA. After some consideration, guidelines were adopted which separated public works projects according to size. The PWA handled all projects over \$25,000, and the Works Progress Administration handled those under this amount. PWA funded only construction projects, while the WPA could also fund repair and maintenance as well as non-construction work, thereby employing professional, clerical, and other white-collar workers. The PWA could provide grants and loans, while the WPA only provided grants. Since the WPA was chiefly concerned with work-relief, and the PWA had more severe rules for financing, the PWA might reject a project that the WPA would later find eligible for its program.⁹⁰ Sometimes, projects initially planned as PWA projects were divided into small segments, with those handled and

⁸⁹Ickes, pp. 10-11.

⁹⁰Isakoff, p. 25.

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therefore constructed by the WPA.⁹¹ This might occur if a community could not come up with the necessary match required by the PWA.

At its conclusion, the PWA claimed that all but three counties in the nation had benefited from at least one PWA project. A total of 34,500 projects across the country were funded by the agency. From 1933 through March 1939, the PWA aided in the construction of approximately 70% of all the educational buildings nationwide; 65% of the sewage treatment plants; 65% of the courthouses, city halls, and other public buildings; 35% of the hospitals; and 10% of all the roads and related engineering structures.⁹² While its physical record of construction was impressive, it is difficult to assess the economic impact of the PWA on the economic conditions underlying the Depression since it was not primarily concerned with unemployment relief. Since the bulk of the costs of PWA projects were for the manufacture and transportation of materials, only a small portion of the costs actually benefited employment at the site. As a "pump-primer" for the economy, however, proponents of the agency argued that its effectiveness should not be measured solely on the basis of employment figures. Furthermore, the PWA asserted in their own publications that three factors should be taken into account when measuring the amount of employment created by a PWA project: on-site employment, primary indirect employment in those industries which supplied and transported materials, and secondary indirect employment for those industries which provided living needs for both the project and supply workers. It was estimated that primary indirect employment was approximately two-and-a-half times the on-site employment, and secondary indirect was about two times the on-site figures. Therefore, the PWA considered the true employment created to be about five-and-one-half times the on-site employment figures.⁹³ The program estimated that with approximately 140,000 workers employed every year of its existence, as many as 600,000 additional jobs were created annually.

In addition to its economic and public works construction benefits, the PWA is credited for the rise in, or in some case, the creation of, community and even statewide planning. By 1939, over 1,500 towns, cities, and counties had planning commissions, working on comprehensive plans in order to coordinate federal relief projects, thus securing their approval.⁹⁴ This represented a significant increase in professional planning activities.

After the PWA was extended with a \$4.8 billion appropriation under the Emergency Relief Appropriations Act of 1936, it received another \$59 million extension in 1937 from the Public

⁹¹Wickens, p. 201.

⁹²United States, Public Works Administration, America Builds : The Record of PWA, Public Works Administration (Washington, U. S. Govt. Print. Off., 1939), p. 6.

⁹³Isakoff, p. 138.

⁹⁴America Builds, pp. 10-11.

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Works Administration Extension Act. This was due to the fact that many of the projects the agency had started were not finished, and its allocated funds were not yet exhausted. In 1938, the agency received a \$1.6 billion appropriation to allow it to finish ongoing projects by June 30, 1941, the date set for ceasing operations. PWA began to phase out its operations in 1939, and released a call for final project applications. A flurry of projects was then submitted, so Roosevelt's Reorganization Plan of 1939 called for the PWA to be adopted as a department of the Federal Works Agency. In 1940, though, the PWA took on building public works for defense purposes. This program lasted until 1942, when the agency was terminated.

Architecture of the PWA

The P. W. A. does not design any buildings or projects. It does not write the specifications or make any drawings. The character of architecture, the materials to be used and the type of construction are left entirely to the private architects and engineers employed by the owners on Non-federal projects and those employed by the Federal agencies . . .⁹⁵

This analysis of the buildings constructed by the PWA explains why there was a wide diversity of styles used throughout the country. Some buildings reflected trends in the growing Modern movement; others were regional adaptations of popular styles. Although the styles of PWA buildings varied, because of the generally large scale of the PWA projects, the required adherence to basic construction standards, and the elaborate review process, the overall quality of public works structures improved under the watch of the PWA. The types and scale of the projects constructed by the PWA also utilized more ornamentation and architectural decorations than were found on the smaller, simpler WPA projects. In some cases, sculptors and painters were even employed to decorate PWA buildings, although the artwork itself was often funded by WPA or other New Deal relief programs.

The PWA employed a traveling engineer to help local communities plan their projects, but the selection of the actual designer of the project was left up to the local community. The regional PWA office reviewed applications for their overall competence, including the legality of contracts, proposed financing, and its engineering. The PWA did not assume the legal responsibility to check plans for structural soundness, but did review them for their conformity to accepted general standards. Furthermore, the project was reviewed for its adequacy in relation to its purpose. Did it meet the needs of the present population and account for future growth, or was it too big? Did it meet modern school requirements? The reviewing engineer thus had to be an expert not only on building types and modern construction standards, but also required

⁹⁵C. W. Short and R. Stanley-Brown, *Public Buildings: Architecture Under the Public Works Administrations 1933-1939 Vol. 1* (Washington, U.S. Government. Printing Office, 1939; reprint ed., New York: Da Capo Press, 1986), p. vi.

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knowledge of the communities in his region and their needs. Finally, the reviewing engineer would consult with the local architect/engineer and sometimes suggest changes. This extensive review process helped raise the standards of construction for PWA projects. For many communities, it was the first time the Federal government was interested in local projects, leading the designers to produce the best work they were capable of, especially in rural areas.⁹⁶

In a review of architecture of the Public Works Administration published in 1939, authors R. Stanley-Brown and C. W. Short Brown felt that the PWA contributed in many ways with projects exhibiting innovations in construction techniques and engineering. In their opinion, the greatest improvement in design during the agency's existence was made in the architectural treatment of sewage-disposal plants, incinerators, and power and pumping stations. This was followed (in order) by dams, courthouses, city halls, auditoriums, post offices, schools college buildings, and waterworks. The types of designs that did not improve architecturally during the PWA's existence included the design of armories, which in their opinion were particularly unsuccessful. Additionally, only a few good examples of prisons were constructed by the PWA, and the design of hospitals and most institutional buildings had not advanced much.⁹⁷ Of course, the PWA did not approve projects based on their aesthetics; neither did the agency select the designers.⁹⁸

The PWA in Colorado

When the PWA was first established, it was divided for administration purposes into twelve regions. Instead of being grouped with other Rocky Mountain states, Colorado was placed administratively with Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri and Arkansas, with headquarters in Arkansas. A state advisory board, generally three people with both political parties represented, operated beneath these twelve regional districts.⁹⁹ Colorado's State PWA Advisory Board was directed by Thomas A. Duke of Pueblo. The board was responsible for screening the project applications first, only sending on those deemed worthy to the federal level. George M. Bull was appointed as Colorado's engineer for the PWA. Bull served as the final authority on all Colorado PWA projects, not only finalizing all the contract agreements, but directing construction, and enforcing the PWA regulations.¹⁰⁰

Soon after the establishment of the federal PWA program, prominent Denver businessmen

⁹⁶Ibid., p. ix.

⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹Isakoff, p. 36.

¹⁰⁰Wickens, pp. 179-180.

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formed the Colorado Committee on Industrial Recovery in order to obtain suggestions for projects in the state. After the committee was announced in mid-1933, the group was immediately flooded with project proposals from local governing bodies. By the time Ickes was ready to accept official proposals, the committee was ready with a long list of proposals to submit to Colorado's PWA Advisory Board. By the fall of 1933, Washington had preliminarily approved more than one hundred projects in Colorado. However, this initial rush of activity was soon bogged down by a variety of factors. First, Secretary Ickes was very slow to make final approval on PWA projects; his delay of federal approval for Colorado's projects made the state one of the last in the nation to put men to work. Eight months after the PWA was established, only 165 workers had been employed for PWA projects in Colorado. Colorado was not the only state to experience Ickes's scrupulous examination of projects, but residents and officials here felt slighted and began to voice their displeasure. After all, in 1933 PWA projects represented 33 percent of all the construction nationwide, but Colorado's situation was certainly not represented in this ratio. Another factor that caused delays was Ickes' requirement that PWA projects be put out to bid to contractors in order to stimulate private enterprise. The bidding process was very time-consuming; in fact, by the time the bids were final, costs had sometimes risen over the amount allocated, and the process had to start over again. Thus 1933 ended without PWA either helping to reduce unemployment or stimulate the economy in the state.¹⁰¹

Colorado's claims that the state was being neglected by the PWA continued into 1934, and even began to attract national attention. With the arrival of warm weather and the construction season, though, work finally commenced on several PWA projects in the state in mid-1934, including several highway projects, buildings, dams, and water systems. Work slowed again the following winter, though, and construction workers were laid off at a time when unemployment was extremely high in Colorado. Nearly one-quarter of the state's residents were on relief at this point.¹⁰² The issue of seasonal lay-offs in the winter months was a criticism that would plague the PWA throughout its tenure in Colorado.

The PWA's administrative procedures were not solely to blame for the slow start of the program in the state, however. Colorado's constitutional provisions prohibited it from going into debt, which was necessary in order to provide the matching funds for the PWA grants. Similar issues were also faced by the smaller municipalities in providing matching funds, thereby preventing the start of many local non-federal projects. Most local government charters prevented the cities from issuing bonds without a vote; all of this took not only time, but some convincing for local residents as well. Without the bonds, the city could not borrow the needed money for the match. This was not an uncommon problem nationwide. As a result, the PWA actually sent attorneys and financial experts to communities to help them write new laws and devise new

¹⁰¹Ibid., pp. 182-184.

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 191.

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methods of financing that would allow them to undertake these projects.¹⁰³

With all of these factors causing setbacks, by late 1935, Colorado had only received grants and loans for forty-one non-federal projects totaling \$6 million – less than one percent of the non-federal PWA money nationwide. In 1935, however, the state legislature approved laws that allowed both the state and municipalities to more readily borrow funds, in turn giving them the tools to provide the required matches for PWA funds. At about the same time, the PWA program nationwide received a new appropriation of nearly \$5 billion to expand its public works program. The next year, Colorado finally started receiving a bigger share of the national PWA appropriations; an additional \$12.1 million was granted or loaned to complete forty PWA projects throughout the state. This was the largest amount of money spent west of the Mississippi, compensating for Colorado's slow start. Still, the program was able to provide full-time jobs for only 2,870 men from 1933 through 1936, and then for only six months out of a year.¹⁰⁴

As the PWA administration became more decentralized, Colorado was granted more power over the projects. Popular state PWA engineer George Bull was appointed as the regional PWA director. The PWA also increased its grant portion of a total project costs to 45 percent. This was just the stimulus needed to spur the state of Colorado into entering a program for public building construction.¹⁰⁵ Helping to “grease the wheel” in the PWA application process for statewide projects was the creation of the Colorado State Planning Commission. It was created by executive order in 1934 and statutes in 1935, with financial aid from the National Resources Board to help in its establishment. The Commission's stated purpose was twofold; Section 1 of the Act establishing it further referenced the role that the PWA had in its instigation:

For the purpose of promoting the conservation and orderly development of the natural resources of Colorado, and the intelligent and economical coordination of its public works, and for the further purpose of giving all possible cooperation to the national program for such conservation and development, to the end that wasteful and extravagant practices may be eliminated, . . .¹⁰⁶

Although there were several standing committees of the State Planning Commission, the commission had two main objectives: conserving and developing Colorado's natural resources,

¹⁰³ America Builds, pp. 66-67.

¹⁰⁴ Wickens, p. 195-196, 199.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., pp. 200-201.

¹⁰⁶ Elmore Petersen, Ten Years of State Planning in Colorado (n.p.: Colorado State Planning Commission, 19 November 1945) 8.

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and coordinating the public works in the state. Although some of its research and reports were of significance to eastern Colorado, such as the aforementioned "Report on Land Resources of the Great Plains Area of Colorado," it was the Committee on Public Works that is most closely associated with the building programs of the New Deal. In 1937, the Commission proposed a ten-year construction program at twenty of Colorado's twenty-three state institutions. The majority were planned as PWA projects, with the state match provided by a mill levy.¹⁰⁷ With the Commission's planned program of statewide construction as its guide, the PWA awarded a \$4 million grant to Colorado, over one-third of the total cost of \$11.4 million for the entire statewide program.¹⁰⁸ Depending on the size of the projects, some of these were eventually constructed by the WPA, which required less match.

Construction at many of Colorado's institutions was critically needed; many had gone for more than thirty years without any expansion or development. Some were even using buildings erected before Colorado achieved statehood in 1876.¹⁰⁹ Although the physical plants at these institutions had lagged far behind their needs for decades, the Depression effectively stopped any hopes of expansion until the PWA program was initiated. The non-educational institutions had the greatest needs and were completed first, although colleges and universities in Colorado also benefited immensely from the PWA program. Higher education had been low on the legislators' list for state funds for many years due to the state budget crisis, so the PWA was a boon for these schools during the Depression years.¹¹⁰ None of the state institutional PWA building projects were located in eastern Colorado, though, so its impact in eastern Colorado in this aspect of the program was negligible.

The State Planning Commission also helped local governmental agencies in planning for their own public works projects through the PWA. That advice ranged from helping to develop financial plans and develop logical and orderly construction programs, to coordinating those programs with the statewide plans. The types of public works projects that particularly benefited from statewide coordination included roads, water supplies, sewage disposal, parks, and airports.¹¹¹ The assistance given by the State Planning Commission to the small rural communities in eastern Colorado likely had a far greater impact than for those towns and cities with higher populations. Rural Colorado did not have much access to planning professionals,

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁰⁸Wickens, pp. 202-203.

¹⁰⁹Colorado State Planning Commission, "The Ten-Year Building Program of the State Institutions of Colorado," Report of the Colorado State Planning Commission to the Governor and the Thirty-third General Assembly, January 1941, p. 3.

¹¹⁰Leonard, p. 100.

¹¹¹Petersen, p. 9.

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and the guidance they received from the State Planning Commission may have been the first exposure these communities had to long-range planning for public works.

Because of the state's mostly semi-arid climate, combined with the immediate drought crisis of the thirties, water projects dominated much of the PWA's work in Colorado; many of these provided benefits to eastern Colorado. The Moffat Tunnel diversion project, planned to supply the Denver water system with Western Slope water from the Fraser River, was the first PWA project in Colorado. As the most costly and difficult non-federal PWA job in the state, it began in 1935, and was not completed until late 1938 at a cost of over \$9.5 million. Another huge PWA water project was the Colorado-Big Thompson proposal – the fourth largest irrigation project in the nation. The drought-stricken farmers in the South Platte River valley of northeastern Colorado, despairing of the fact that unused Western Slope water was escaping to California, asked Congress in 1936 to authorize loans to finance the project. After facing initial opposition from the western part of the state, the project was eventually approved. To compensate for taking the water, the Green Mountain Reservoir was included in the project for western slope storage. Besides the western slope storage, the Colorado-Big Thompson project included dams, tunnels, power plants, and storage reservoirs on the eastern slope, in order to provide eastern Colorado farmers with irrigation water and electricity. It was the largest project ever undertaken by the Bureau of Reclamation; its construction did not begin until 1938 and took twenty years to complete. Because of its lengthy construction phase, its Depression-era impact was limited although its benefits for northeastern Colorado were promised to last well into the twenty-first century.¹¹²

Sewage disposal plants comprised another large sector of PWA projects. Their construction was significant in improving Coloradans' health, because – in spite of its healthy image – Colorado was actually one of the most unhealthy states in the West. Deaths from diarrhea, enteritis, and typhoid cases were very high, due primarily to a lack of adequate sanitation facilities. State PWA officials suggested sewage treatment plant projects to various cities in an effort to help cleanse rivers and even offered large grants, but most were rejected. Trinidad and Boulder were first to take advantage of the grant offers, after Denver voters rejected a bond to pay for theirs; finally other cities began to take advantage of the PWA funding. By late 1935, \$4 million in sewage project applications were received by the PWA from Colorado.¹¹³

¹¹²Leonard, p. 102.

¹¹³Wickens, pp. 198-199, 207-208.

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By 1942, more than 500 projects were completed by the Colorado PWA program; over two-fifths of those were non-federal. The non-federal projects included seventy-four schools and gymnasiums, thirty college buildings, fourteen hospital and state institution buildings, thirty-eight waterworks, sixteen public buildings (including courthouses and city halls), twelve sewer systems or disposal plants, nine transportation projects, one recreational project, and eleven miscellaneous.¹¹⁴ PWA loans and grants for both types of projects amounted to \$45,600,985 of the total costs of \$72,338,454. Although Colorado's population placed it 33rd in the nation in 1940, it ranked 23rd in states in providing matching funds for PWA grants, in part because the change in state laws made borrowing much easier.

Although many of the large PWA projects were either located in the larger Front Range communities or dealt with transmontane water issues, eastern Colorado communities took advantage of PWA funding to establish, construct, or improve their public works facilities. Appendix E shows the seventy-nine non-federal PWA applications received from towns or counties in eastern Colorado.¹¹⁵ A wide range of projects can be seen, from schools, town halls, courthouses, waterworks, and sanitary sewer systems. Thirty-one of the projects dealt with municipal or school buildings, additions, or improvements. Five additional applications were received for university-related buildings in Greeley. The largest category of projects was public utilities (40), with the single largest project type being waterworks or mains (13). Other water-related PWA projects in eastern Colorado included a water tank, well pump, pump station, three reservoirs, a filter plant, and irrigation systems.¹¹⁶ These figures are generally in proportion to the overall state figures for construction in these categories, with the exception of a general lack of hospital and state institutional buildings in eastern Colorado.

Although the physical results of the PWA program significantly added to the quality of life in several eastern Colorado towns, only a small portion of the costs of these projects likely went directly into the local economy. Since labor was a small portion of the overall project costs, and

¹¹⁴Ibid., p. 411. This figure conflicts with the number of projects listed in Appendix D, which shows 485 non-federal projects, and does not include the federal projects. However, this is likely just a list of applications; not all applications for projects were funded. This list probably also contains projects that were approved for funding but were never constructed. Unfortunately, due to an illegal disposal of records in 1943, most of the federal PWA files have been lost. The state did not keep records either. Future survey work will help determine the actual numbers of PWA projects that were completed.

¹¹⁵Some of these may represent duplicate applications or continuations of the same project.

¹¹⁶United States, Public Works Administration, "Alphabetical Index to Non-Federal Projects: State: Colorado," 8 February 1939.

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most of that was skilled labor (likely imported), very few of eastern Colorado's unemployed were helped by PWA projects. Furthermore, even though the PWA promoted buying construction materials locally *whenever possible*, eastern Colorado did not have many sources for all of the construction materials needed in these larger public works projects. Although brick, clay products, limestone, marble, granite, lumber, hardwoods, and cement were available in the state, they were not necessarily all found in eastern Colorado. Most metal products, steel, and manufactured goods were imported from outside the state.¹¹⁷ It is certain that eastern Colorado's economy was not boosted by the purchase of construction materials for PWA projects in other localities. Most of the money for materials and manufactured building products benefited other states and localities. A study of the distribution of the dollars spent on materials shows that Colorado ranked in the bottom eleven of states, while manufacturing, steel and lumber-producing states in the top third received anywhere from six to forty-two times the PWA material dollars spent in Colorado!¹¹⁸ Thus the five-and-a-half times multiplier of on-site employment for projects, promoted by the PWA as the true representation of jobs created, certainly did not apply to eastern Colorado's employment picture.

The architectural styles of PWA projects in eastern Colorado were varied. Since the PWA did not provide architects or plans, the local governments were free to hire anyone. In examining the styles found on PWA buildings in Colorado, it is interesting to note the comments which were contained in a study of the architecture of the PWA, Public Buildings – Architecture under the Public Works Administration: 1933-39. Although not all the comments pertain to eastern Colorado, there are some generalizations that aid in the evaluation of the projects that were constructed here. The authors felt that the projects in Region 5 (which grouped Colorado with Louisiana, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Texas, New Mexico, and Kansas) showed a wider variation in the native architectural styles than any other region, mainly because of the great variation in climate. They also felt that the designs from Colorado, along with Kansas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas “conformed more to the work of the Middle West. . . . [and] The ‘modern’ type of design has appeared occasionally . . .,” although it was less pronounced in federal projects. In federal projects, local traditions or design preferences were usually applied to simple designs with a very sparing use of ornament. The emphasis was primarily on line, composition, scale and proportion. Because of the rigid space requirements in federal projects, the authors felt there were few innovations in plans in Colorado's region. Federal projects strove to eliminate waste with economical plans, though, and improved light and ventilation over previous buildings. The vast majority were fireproof, with steel or reinforced-framed construction, reinforced-concrete

¹¹⁷Short, p. XII.

¹¹⁸Isakoff, p. 72.

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floor slabs, and exterior walls of brick or stone. Exceptions were National Park buildings which were usually log construction.¹¹⁹



Figure 9: According to the authors of the 1939 review of PWA architecture, the Lamar Post Office exhibits several of the hallmarks of a federal project from region 5: use of a regional style, thick walls, reinforced concrete construction covered with stucco, and small windows to reduce heat loss. Photo: Deon Wolfenbarger, June 2004.

The authors believed that any architectural innovations in Region 5 were almost entirely confined to dams, with good designs also seen in the buildings connected with waterworks projects, courthouses, and hospitals. Colorado PWA buildings, much like New Mexico and northern Texas, utilized small windows and thick or well-insulated walls to protect against heat

¹¹⁹Short, pp. xiii-xiv.

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of summer and extreme cold in winter. Both reinforced concrete and steel were used for frame construction, and exterior walls were usually brick, stone, or a stucco facing on either brick or hollow tile walls.¹²⁰ The general overview of PWA architecture in the region was followed by good examples of a building type or style – at least in the opinion of the authors. While there were several Colorado projects selected, none of these were in eastern Colorado.¹²¹

In Colorado as in the rest of the country, the PWA avoided most of the negative publicity that was directed at work relief programs like the WPA. The skilled persons hired by private contractors rarely drew the “leaf-raking” criticisms directed at “make work” programs. Secretary Ickes’ cautious approach, although blamed for the agency’s slow start, led to carefully planned projects. Also, the non-federal projects included local financing ranging from 55 to 70 percent, thus insuring local public support. Finally, the PWA’s director in Colorado was respected and non-political engineer George M. Bull, who at times even won praise from the anti-New Deal *Denver Post*.¹²²

Although often criticized for not reducing employment, it was never the intent of the PWA to do so. Its projects were considered “pump-primers” for the economy during the Great Depression. The PWA also started out slowly in Colorado; in reality, much too slow to stimulate the economy. When 70,000 Coloradans were out of work, the program provided employment for only about 5,600 workers, and then only for six months each year.¹²³ Yet it left lasting contributions in the form of numerous physical improvements to the state’s landscape and public facilities. It offered many eastern Colorado towns, cities and public institutions the only means to build modern public works of any significant scale during the 1930s; many of these buildings and facilities are still in use today.

¹²⁰Ibid., pp. xii-xiii.

¹²¹Chosen as good examples for illustration in the *Public Buildings – Architecture under the Public Works Administration: 1933-39* were: Boulder High School; the Field House and Women’s Club building, University of Colorado in Boulder; the State Hospital for the Insane and the Sewage Disposal Plant in Pueblo; and the Denver City Water Supply System (Moffat Tunnel); Short, pp. 241, 316, 317, 397, 459, and 488-489.

¹²²Leonard, p. 85.

¹²³Wickens, pp. 207-208.

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Colorado's Eastern Plains***IV. The WPA – Work for Everyone: 1935-1942***

Although the early programs of the New Deal relieved the suffering of some Americans, it was clear as 1934 ended that the economic depression and problems of unemployment were not going away. The success of the Civilian Conservation Corps had convinced Roosevelt to come up with another similar approach to unemployment. Most New Dealers believed that working was better than the “dole.” Jobs for the unemployed provided more than a paycheck – they regained their dignity and hope as well. The Roosevelt administration thus proposed to end FERA, its program of direct relief to the states, and replace it with a broader relief and recovery program known as the “Second New Deal.” Central to this new phase was a work relief program for the unemployed, established as the Works Progress Administration (WPA) on May 6, 1935. The WPA not only absorbed the former FERA public works program, but modified and expanded work relief to become the major source of public jobs for the unemployed during the latter part of the thirties. The program’s name was changed to the Works Projects Administration in 1939 when it was reorganized.

The main goal of the WPA program was to put the unemployed back to work and remove them from the relief rolls. “Small useful projects” were designed to provide employment for a maximum number of needy “employable” workers in the “shortest time possible.” Although not all WPA projects were construction-related, its public works projects planned for a majority of a project’s cost to be spent on wages, not on construction materials. Virtually the entire cost of WPA projects was paid directly by the federal government, except for relatively small sums paid by the sponsor. This contrasted with the PWA projects, which were generally larger, more expensive, new construction only (no repairs or maintenance), and were financed by a grant or combined grant and loan. Whereas the PWA’s goal was to stimulate the economy and the private employment of labor, whether or not in need of relief, the WPA’s goal was to put as many people back to work as possible. The WPA eventually grew into the largest provider of work relief in the nation during the remainder of the Depression. In the three year period ending June 30, 1938, about three-fourths of all federal relief works programs employment was provided by the WPA; about one-eighth was provided by the CCC, and the remaining one-eighth by the PWA and all other agencies combined.¹²⁴

Harry L. Hopkins was appointed the chief administrator of the WPA, and in turn, he appointed the directors of each state office. The state WPA offices replaced the local Emergency Relief Administration offices created under FERA. There were two main divisions in the WPA that

¹²⁴Final Report on the WPA Program, pp. 7-8.

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provided jobs – the Division of Engineering and Construction, which oversaw manually constructed projects, and the Service Projects Division.¹²⁵ The construction projects brought about the most widespread and significant change in public capital improvements that the state and nation had ever witnessed, with projects covering municipal engineering, airports and airways, public buildings, highways and roads, conservation projects, engineering survey projects, and disaster emergency activities. The WPA construction projects were intended to provide employment to a large number of unskilled workers, but they also used skilled and semi-skilled workers. Certified WPA skilled workers included carpenters, bricklayers, stone masons, mechanics, painters, plumbers, and others; but also included railroad trainmen and others who could not use their skills on WPA projects. Semiskilled workers included truck drivers and factory workers who had to be assigned other work. Since not all workers' skills could be used on WPA projects, some were obliged to adapt themselves.

Nationwide, about half of the construction employment went to highway, road, and street projects. Public utilities such as water and sewage systems, projects for parks, and projects for public buildings made another third, and the remainder involved conservation, sanitation, and airport projects. The construction of public buildings generally involved the highest percentage of skilled workers on a project – about 30 percent. Road construction usually required as little as eight percent skilled workers. Foremen were generally hired from outside the project; if they later were able to find other work, the project supervisor would often promote from within. In fact, the WPA provided training for all unskilled workers in the use of unfamiliar tools, and many were promoted up through the skilled grades.¹²⁶

The Service Projects covered a wide variety of work projects, and provided employment to women as well as white-collar professionals. Projects relating to adult education, the arts (including writing, music, performance, and the visual arts), records and research projects provided jobs to people who had lost related work in similar professions. Rural women were given jobs sewing, gardening, canning, distributing commodities, and serving hot lunches – thereby taking a two-part approach to helping the needy: by providing jobs for the women employed on the projects, and distributing the goods to the needy. Only the National Youth Administration (NYA) program sometimes worked on construction projects.

The number of federal and state-sponsored WPA projects was small, but these were often important projects such as promoting conservation of natural resources, working on disease and

¹²⁵Other divisions within the organization dealt with administrative issues.

¹²⁶Final Report on the WPA Program, p. 45.

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insect control in farms and forests, research studies, improving army and navy facilities, and flood control. The vast majority of WPA projects were planned, initiated and sponsored by county, city, and other various local public agencies. Suggestions for local projects might come from WPA officials, as well as from civic organizations or private citizens. The formal proposals, however, had to be made by a public agency legally empowered to support the work proposed. The project application had to show the estimated cost of work, what portion was paid by sponsors, and the amount and kinds of labor required. Proposals for construction projects had to be accompanied by preliminary engineering/architectural plans and specs.¹²⁷ Actual working drawings were often prepared by the sponsor after approval by Washington.

Although the planning and initiation of projects was the sponsor's responsibility, WPA officials often suggested eligible projects. Sometimes project proposals were prepared cooperatively by the responsible local officials and the WPA district engineer, particularly in the cases of rural communities and small towns with no access to architects or professional planners. If unsuitable projects were submitted by small communities which had no engineering departments, these plans usually were not rejected outright, but returned with suggestions for revisions. Since the purpose of the program was to get as many people to work as fast as possible, the WPA rarely tried to improve upon the plans. For larger cities, though, engineering departments began advance planning with a view of securing WPA assistance, and divided public works requiring more than one year in construction into progressive phases meeting the \$25,000 maximum funding ceiling; these phases were then approved over several funding periods. This allowed larger projects to be constructed with a minimum of sponsor match, as opposed to that required if the larger projects had been funded by the PWA.¹²⁸

Since the Depression had basically halted all planning for local public works, many communities were not prepared to submit plans for new public facilities. Thus in the early stages of the WPA program, many of the initial projects involved repairing buildings. As the program developed and expanded, more applications for new construction were received. Furthermore, many of the projects became more sophisticated, which often led to a higher percentage of skilled labor needed. Since the WPA program was geared towards increasing employment for unskilled labor, monolithic concrete construction came into greater use (since it required the least amount of highly skilled labor.)

¹²⁷No preliminary plans or specs remain for WPA projects at the National Archives in College Park, Md. In rare occasions when a proposal was modified, these plans were sometimes retained with the project file.

¹²⁸Final Report on the WPA Program, p. 29.

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The selection of building materials was also affected by the WPA's comparatively lenient requirements for match. There was no fixed minimum percentage for a sponsor's contribution to a WPA project until the ERA Act of 1939, which increased the sponsors' contributions within a state to twenty-five percent of the cost of all projects. As this percentage was given to a state as a whole, rather than individual projects, the states had some leeway in determining which projects to approve. Some states even assisted local governments with state funds. A sponsor's contribution did not have to be cash; it could include office space, supplies, construction materials, equipment, tools, skilled labor, or technical supervision.¹²⁹ If building materials could not be found locally or salvaged from other WPA demolition projects, then other inexpensive materials were used. Concrete was again desirable from the sponsor's point of view as it was less expensive than most other forms of construction, thereby lowering the project's total costs and therefore the sponsor's contribution. In many instances, concrete worked well with designs which fit local architectural traditions, as in southwestern Hispanic Spanish communities.¹³⁰ Other inexpensive construction materials included locally quarried stone, or resources salvaged from other WPA demolition projects.

Other inherent goals of the WPA were reflected in trends regarding the style or design of these projects. Simple designs which eliminated ornate architectural features, intricate structural designs, and elaborate trim were best suited to unskilled labor. Furthermore, "[t]he WPA followed the newer tendencies towards simplification in architectural style."¹³¹ The WPA also urged sponsors to design buildings which would require the least amount of mechanized equipment as possible; again, to maximize the number of unskilled laborers and minimize the number of skilled laborers. "The result was the construction of thousands of public buildings of simple and pleasing appearance and sound architectural design, with savings both in original cost and in future maintenance."¹³²

Some of the employment goals of the WPA were not conducive to typical construction practices, though. Unlike the PWA, which laid off workers during the winter, the WPA's goal was to provide year-round employment if possible. The winter months were often the worst for unemployment, especially in agricultural areas, and the WPA did not want to add to the number of unemployed by laying off workers. WPA construction projects thus often broke with custom and carried on work that ordinarily would have been performed in better weather. Only in periods of extreme cold or storms were projects temporarily suspended.¹³³

¹²⁹Ibid., p. 9.

¹³⁰Ibid., p. 52.

¹³¹Ibid.

¹³²Ibid.

¹³³Ibid.

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The Works Progress Administration was reorganized and renamed when it received additional appropriations in 1939. Now called the Works Projects Administration, it became a division of the Federal Works Agency. Sponsors were now also required to pay one-quarter of a project's estimated costs. The new legislation also stipulated that states discharge all relief workers who had been on the rolls for more than eighteen consecutive months, resulting in a reduction in the number of WPA workers available for projects. No part of the new appropriations for the WPA were to go for defense or military projects. The outbreak of World War II, however, changed that requirement, and the WPA began to move towards national defense. The WPA continued to reduce its rolls, and by 1942 the entire program concentrated on the war effort. The War Public Works took over the remaining projects in 1942, just before Roosevelt ordered the liquidation of the program.

The WPA accounted for almost half of all federal relief appropriations in the nation during the entire Depression. It is natural that the program would have a long list of accomplishments to match those appropriations. Major construction accomplishments nationwide included the building or improving of 651,000 miles of roads, the erection or improvement of 125,110 buildings, the installation of 16,100 miles of water mains and distribution lines, 24,300 miles of sewerage facilities, and the construction of many airports. Service projects included hot lunch programs for schools, child health centers, recreation centers, and literacy classes. The total federal expenditure for all WPA projects in the U.S. was \$10,136,743,000, while the sponsors contributed \$2,837,713,000.

The WPA also could boast of some less tangible achievements. The program was significant for its assistance with local governments' preparations for long-range plans for municipal improvements. The WPA provided smaller communities with professional assistance in preparing designs for local projects, which otherwise would have had no access to this expertise. As its primary goal was to provide work for the unemployed, towards that goal the WPA employed approximately 8.5 million people nationwide during its existence, who were paid almost \$9 billion in WPA wages. During its eight years in operation, nearly one-fourth of all U.S. families were dependent on WPA wages for support. Despite this, only about one-quarter of the nation's unemployed were hired by the program. A program this expansive clearly had its detractors, and it certainly was not as popular as some other New Deal agencies, such as the CCC. Unlike the smaller and more rigid PWA, which managed to avoid many of the criticisms aimed at the WPA, the WPA was meant to put people back to work in every community that needed it. Therefore, some projects of lesser quality were accepted. To the millions of Americans who *did* receive jobs, the WPA provided a means to survive the Great Depression. It is clearly one of the most significant and expansive programs by which the New Deal was judged.

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When Harry Hopkins sent Lorena Hickok out to visit the West in 1934 and 1935, he wanted to know not only how people in the drought-stricken regions were faring, but also how well the FERA program was working.¹³⁴ Hickok reported back that the families in the West wanted to work. It was not enough to provide relief; many were losing hope of ever working again or getting their farms or ranches back into production. In response, the Roosevelt administration decided to initiate several programs and policies geared specifically towards the plight of the nation's farmers, as well as a general work relief program to fix the unemployment problems of all Americans. The Works Progress Administration was not one of the programs specifically created to provide employment for rural Americans; it was for *all* individuals who wanted a job and were capable of working. In reality, though, it provided temporary jobs for thousands of Colorado residents, both rural and urban alike, and resulted in the construction of public works projects in every Colorado county and virtually every community across the state. It was the single largest construction and employment program in the state during the thirties.

Paul D. Shriver was appointed as the head of the Colorado WPA program by Harry Hopkins. Shriver's appointment was the beginning of controversy for the WPA program in Colorado. Governor "Big Ed" Johnson accused Shriver of supporting U.S. Senator Edward Prentiss Costigan. Although both Johnson and Costigan were Democrats, Costigan was a firm "New Dealer." Johnson, although initially supportive of the program (and certainly frequent in his requests from the federal administration for more money for Colorado), eventually grew to repudiate the WPA program and the New Deal. In a Labor Day speech in 1935, Johnson claimed:

Our public works program to date has been a terrible disappointment and the most terrifying thing about it is that it cannot be continued without bankrupting the federal government, nor can it be discontinued until the whole problem of unemployment is permanently solved . . . Piddling around with leaf-raking projects just to give politicians a job is criminal and is of no value whatsoever and clearly a waste of public funds.¹³⁵

Johnson's discontent with the WPA program began when it got off to a slow start in Colorado. The jobless began flooding the Governor's office with demands for work. Rather than use any state money to solve the problem, Johnson went straight to Roosevelt requesting direct relief funds "in the amount of a million dollars." Roosevelt did grant Colorado \$350,000, leading Johnson to make another request just a month later. When this request was refused, Johnson's

¹³⁴Lowitt, p. 8.

¹³⁵In Wickens, p. 283.

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anger at the Roosevelt administration grew. Further adding to Johnson's worries was his belief that the WPA program would aid Senator Costigan's bid for re-election, a seat that Johnson coveted for himself. Johnson charged that the WPA housed Costigan sympathizers, and that many of the relief workers were just supporters that didn't really need jobs. He ordered Shriver to open the WPA payroll records for inspection. When Shriver finally relented, Johnson's inspectors were unable to find evidence of wrong-doing. That did not matter to Johnson, who maintained his dislike and criticism for the program throughout the remainder of its existence.¹³⁶

In addition to these issues, Johnson strongly disagreed with the decision to admit aliens to the WPA rolls. This issue was of such importance to Johnson that on April 18, 1936, he proclaimed that the state faced an invasion from "aliens and indigent persons" looking for jobs. To counter the trespassers, he ordered the National Guard and nearby CCC enrollees to seal off Colorado's southern border and to turn away non-citizens and poor travelers. The blockade lasted less than two weeks, after the Governor of New Mexico threatened to ban Colorado products with his own blockade. While this bravado may have earned "Big Ed" some votes, some in eastern Colorado did not support his actions threatening the friendship of neighboring states. The *Lamar Daily News* suggested that if Johnson was so anxious to get his picture in the paper, he should "display his manly beauty in bathing trunks . . . This ought to make a sure hit and it would be cheaper than declaring war on the rest of the United States."¹³⁷

While Johnson was busy with complaints about the WPA, the program enrolled thousands of unemployed Coloradans in 1935. By early November 1936, 9,000 people were busy with WPA work projects in the state, and by late December more than 40,000 had received jobs. The numbers of WPA employed rose to 43,200 by March 1937, the peak of its working force in Colorado during the Depression.¹³⁸ Budget cuts required "retrenchments" in the WPA program several times throughout its history, forcing the state program to cut back the number of jobs at various times. Unfortunately, many of these occurred when Colorado was experiencing a recession, such as in the summer of 1937. By early 1938, the unemployment and relief situation in Colorado had nearly reached that of the desperate times of early 1933. One in five people in the state was on relief, so Colorado WPA administrator Shriver initiated an emergency work program and rehired 15,000 workers in early 1938. When the WPA finally received more federal funds, the program was expanded again, particularly in southern Colorado which had the highest percentage of unemployed in the state.¹³⁹ The periods of retrenchment and expansion are

¹³⁶Ibid., pp. 282-285.

¹³⁷Leonard, pp. 75, 79.

¹³⁸Ibid., p. 85.

¹³⁹Wickens, pp. 300-301.

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reflected in the WPA project applications in eastern Colorado, with a higher number of project applications submitted in 1936 and 1938. By the same token, a number of projects in eastern Colorado had to be stopped during the periods when the WPA had to reduce its workforce.

The number of yearly applications for construction projects in eastern Colorado was also affected by new federal legislation in 1939, which now required sponsors to pay twenty-five percent of the project's cost. Although this percentage actually applied to the state as a whole (requiring a twenty-five percent match statewide of all WPA projects), it still led to a noticeable decrease in interest from many of the communities. Also, new federal regulations required that workers who had been on the WPA rolls longer than eighteen consecutive months to be discharged, affecting more than a quarter of Colorado's WPA workers – one of the highest proportions in the nation.¹⁴⁰ This left fewer workers eligible for certification in eastern Colorado.

By the time it dismissed its last 1,700 employees in December 1942, the Colorado WPA program had given jobs to approximately 150,000 people statewide. The total number of worker hours spent on WPA projects in Colorado was 195,518,207. The program cost the federal government \$120,102,731 in Colorado, 88.6% of which went directly to wages. About 15% of the \$33,489,704 contributed by the sponsors went to wages.¹⁴¹ Workers were paid according to their skill and region; because Colorado's prevailing union wage scale was high, WPA workers here received the highest wages paid by the agency. This ranged from \$40 a month for non-skilled workers, to \$94 for skilled labor.

From the standpoint of unemployment relief, the WPA expenditures for service projects in eastern Colorado were as important as the construction jobs. Statewide, the WPA expended \$1,644,458 in funds for service division projects. Just as important were the products and services that were produced from this division, all of which went to needy Coloradans. WPA workers produced 6,730,092 garments and over 5 million quarts of preserved food. Over 22 million hot lunches were served in the state, placing Colorado in the top five in the nation, an unfortunate reflection on the impact the Depression had on children.¹⁴² The majority of these service projects were conducted in existing buildings, but occasionally a WPA construction project would build a facility to house these programs.

¹⁴⁰Ibid., p. 302.

¹⁴¹Final Report on the WPA Program, pp. 115, 120, 124.

¹⁴²Ibid., p. 134.

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By far, the WPA construction projects in Colorado made the greatest impact on reducing unemployment and on the improvement of the state's public infrastructure. A breakdown of the percentage of construction project funds by project type in the state generally follows the national averages, except in the areas of conservation and buildings – here Colorado was higher than the national average. Airports and runways comprised 5.5 percent of the WPA funds in Colorado; 11.7 percent was spent on buildings; 6.2 percent on conservation; .8 percent on engineering surveys; 34.8 percent spent on highways, roads, and streets; 4.2 percent spent on recreational facilities (excluding buildings); 1.3 percent on sanitation; 8.1 percent on water, sewer systems, and other utilities; and 2.1 percent on other projects.¹⁴³



Figure 10: Example of the intensive hand labor that went into the construction of the Bear Creek Bridge in Baca County; 5BA.788.

Photo: National Archives & Records Administration, Still Photograph Collection.

The construction of roads and public buildings made up the bulk of the WPA construction projects in Colorado, though. New and better roads were critical if the state were to take advantage of its tourist and recreational potential, but in eastern Colorado, a network of “farm to

¹⁴³Ibid., pp. 126-127.

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market" roads was absolutely essential for the recovery of the area's agricultural and ranching economy. Both in terms of number of projects and dollars, road construction projects were the most popular WPA programs in the plains counties. Statewide, WPA workers built or improved 9,458 miles of highways, roads, or streets; 3,368 bridges and viaducts; and 21,241 culverts. This amounted to 34.8 percent of Colorado's WPA construction funds.

Schools constituted another major category of WPA construction projects in Colorado. Schools in eastern Colorado were in particularly poor shape. Many districts had been unable to keep up with the enrollment growth of the first three decades of the twentieth century. The Depression then halted all hopes of construction, and existing schools fell into disrepair. Many rural schools were unsafe, crowded, and outdated. Throughout the state, the WPA made significant inroads in solving the school construction problem, by building or adding to 113 schools. Additionally, 381 schools were reconstructed or improved. The figure would have undoubtedly been higher if many other repairs to rural schools had not already been funded by earlier FERA and CWA work programs.

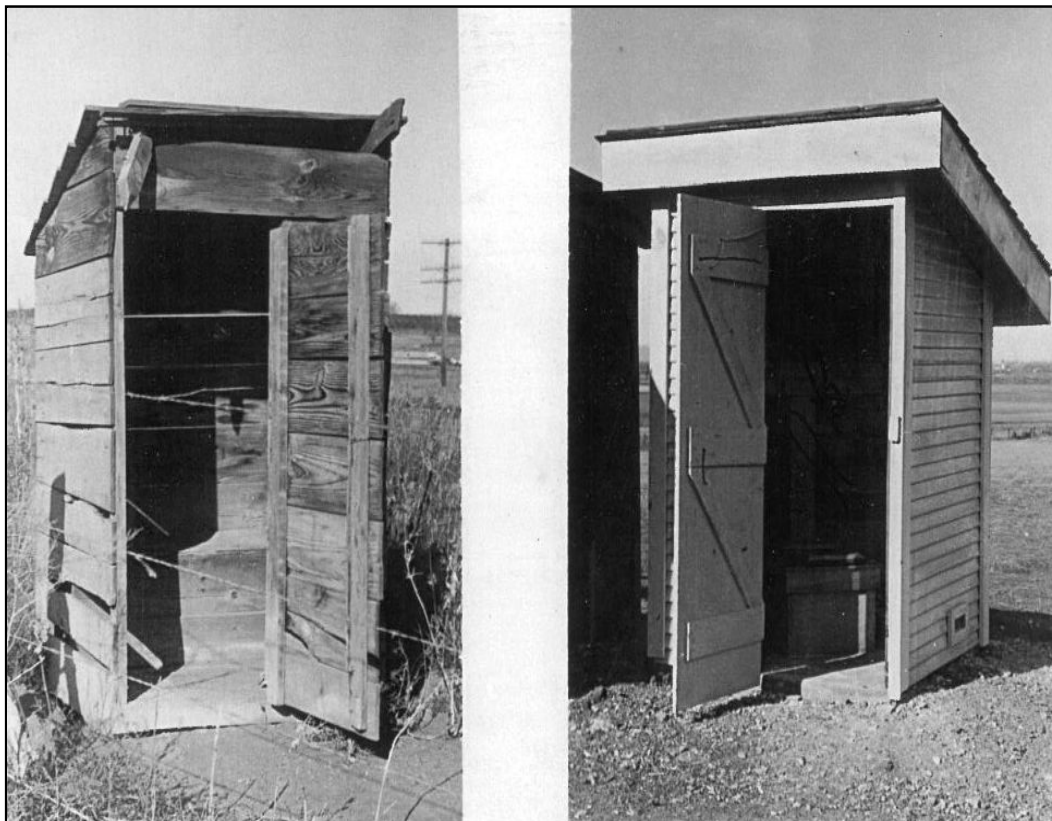


Figure 11: On the left is an "obsolete type" of "open, unsanitary privy". On the right is an "approved type" constructed by the WPA in great numbers all over Colorado – at "individual homes, farms, school buildings, dairies, filling stations, tourist camps, and many public places." Photo: WPA photo albums, Denver Public Library, Western History and Genealogy.

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Another key area of construction was in the area of public buildings. A total of 583 public buildings across the state were new or received additions, and 764 other public buildings were reconstructed or improved.¹⁴⁴ Other important public facilities built or improved by the WPA in Colorado included recreational amenities. The WPA built or improved 119 parks, 195 playground and athletic fields, and 32 swimming or wading pools in the state. Public utilities were also important WPA projects, particularly for those communities that could not afford the match required by the PWA. The WPA constructed or improved 78 utility plants, 279 miles of water mains or distribution pipes, and 224 miles of new storm and sanitary sewers. Associated with the issue of sewage sanitation, but often constructed on private properties, the WPA built an astounding 31,991 sanitary privies across the state!

Airport and runway facilities belonged to a small but critical WPA construction category. This was a fledgling industry at the time, but important to the state's future. Twelve new or improved landing fields were built in the state by the WPA, and seven were reconstructed or improved. 179,565 new and 24,680 reconstructed or improved linear feet of runways were completed. The WPA built or added to thirty-one airport buildings, and reconstructed or improved another 116. Finally, WPA workers were sometimes assigned to other federal agencies, and assisted in soil and forest conservation, flood control, and water conservation projects. The percentage of all WPA construction funds in Colorado directed towards these conservation projects was above the national average, no doubt a reflection of the critical need in these areas.¹⁴⁵

A comparatively small program was the Federal Arts Projects (FAP), a division of the WPA. This program developed into a large-scale plan for unemployed artists, actors, musicians, writers, archivists, and historians. Donald Bear, former director of the Denver Art Museum, administered the arts projects in Colorado. The program included about thirty artists who produced paintings, lithographs, ink sketches, wood block prints, sculptures, and graphics works. They worked mainly in the Denver area, as well as Colorado Springs, Estes Park, and Grand Junction. Over 150 pieces of art were produced to decorate museums, public offices, schools, military posts, and hospitals. Unfortunately, no art works were found in any eastern Colorado communities.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 126-127, 135-136.

¹⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 126-127, 135-136.

¹⁴⁶Ronald Irvin Bruner, *New Deal Art Works in Colorado, Kansas and Nebraska*. (Masters Thesis, University of Denver, August 1979).

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While the PWA was responsible for large dams, waterworks, and public buildings in many areas of the state, the WPA's construction program was far more extensive in the scattered rural communities of eastern Colorado. In terms of number of projects completed during the Depression, it was the largest construction program in the entire state. The WPA grant program provided an alternative to the PWA for rural eastern Colorado communities. It allowed them the means to undertake small, inexpensive public works with very little expenditure on their part. Even for larger projects, the WPA program could still be used as an alternative to the PWA, which required a substantial match. With some advance planning on their parts, the communities



Figure 12: Five buildings were constructed in separate phases for the Prowers County Welfare Housing project. The buildings included housing, a laundry/restroom facility, and commodities distribution offices. Photo: Deon Wolfenbarger, June 2004.

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could submit progressive segments of an overall project for WPA funding and end up with a substantial public works project as a result. The Prowers County Welfare Housing project in Lamar is an example of a phased project. Planned with four multiple-family housing units and a central laundry area, the project was too large to submit as a single WPA project. On the other hand, the county did not have the revenues to provide the 55 percent match required by the PWA. Prowers County residents were suffering from the effects of living in the heart of the Dust Bowl – there were destitute families needing a place to live and men that needed jobs. In consultation with the WPA district officials, the county decided to submit the project in separate phases through the WPA. The phases were submitted consecutively, sometimes in separate funding cycles that occurred within the same year. Thus while one phase was being completed, work would begin on the next phase. The project was still completed in a relatively short time, and soon provided housing for the county's elderly in need. The county welfare department also set up offices in one building, and used a few rooms for commodities distribution. By using local materials and primarily unskilled labor, the county kept their costs low and still met the requirements for providing jobs for unskilled laborers, thereby meeting the goals of the WPA work relief program and providing for the needy of Prowers County at the same time.

Of all the New Deal work relief programs that resulted in the construction of public facilities, the WPA clearly had the most impact on the built environment of the cities, towns, and small communities in eastern Colorado. While other New Deal programs assisted with soil conservation, farm subsidies, and loans – all of which helped the residents of the plains region to survive the decade – the WPA was the program that built the region's schools, roads, and public utilities. A majority of these resources are still in use today – a testimony to hard work during a most difficult period of Colorado's history.

The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

Architecture of the WPA in Eastern Colorado

As previously noted, the primary goal of the WPA was to put people to work, and eastern Colorado had more than its proportionate share of the unemployed. Consequently projects in the plains counties were designed so that a majority of the funds to be spent on labor, not materials. Additionally, powered machinery was not favored as this resulted in fewer men being hired. Therefore, WPA buildings and structures in the eastern part of the state are marked by a high degree of craftsmanship, albeit untrained, provided by primarily unskilled labor. Many men developed skills as their projects progressed. This is sometimes reflected in varying masonry techniques used within a large building or with increasing sophistication of craftsmanship in a

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series of small structures constructed over a long period. The extensive masonry work in the bridges and culverts of Baca County served as fertile training ground in this trade. The quality of masonry work in the stone bridges does vary widely across the county, undoubtedly reflecting not only different teams of workers, but also the growing skills gained by the men by constructing so many bridges. Pride in workmanship, and perhaps in just working, is sometimes reflected in the marks left by WPA workers on their projects. Inscriptions in concrete or masonry are not uncommon. Usually these give a date or project number. The project supervisor for a bridge in Prowers County was so proud that he inscribed his name in the keystone of the arch.



Figure 13: Clifford Clark was the foreman of the Cat Creek bridge project in southwestern Prowers County. Photo: Deon Wolfenbarger, June 2004.



Figure 14: Raised beaded mortar lettering on a concrete stippled background give a folk art quality to the Konantz School in Baca County. Photo: Deon Wolfenbarger, October 2004.

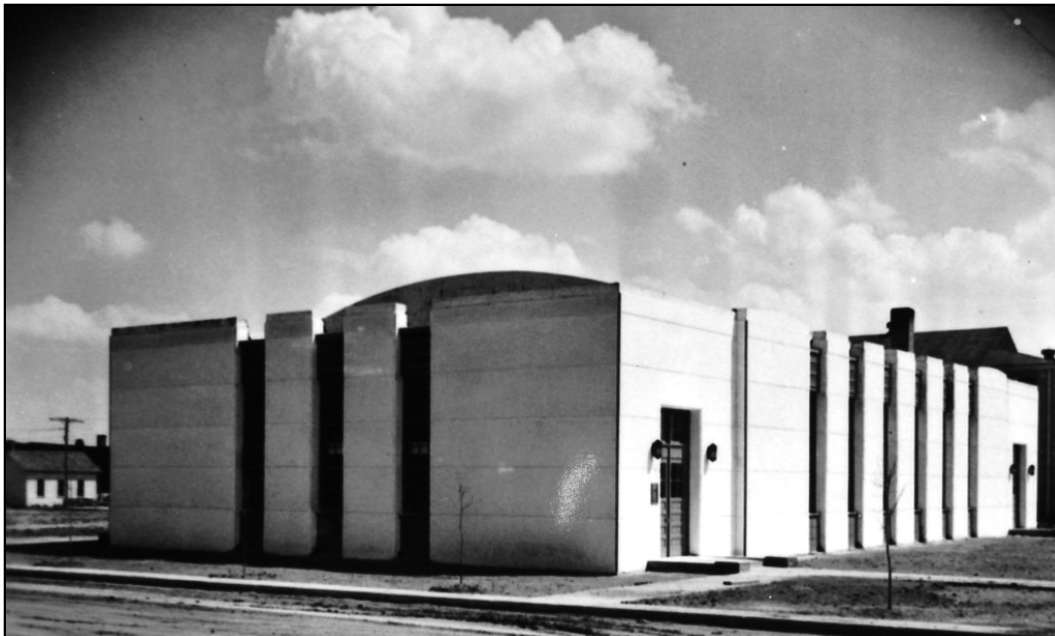
The use of local materials in order to keep costs low is another hallmark of WPA projects. This resulted in some similarities of appearance within a region. In southeastern Colorado, where construction rock was plentiful, there are several notable projects illustrating a variety of masonry techniques. Adobe brick was another inexpensive material, and was often found in areas of Colorado with Hispanic heritage. If rock were not readily available, monolithic concrete construction was another inexpensive alternative. Concrete had the added advantage of requiring the least amount of skilled labor – another aspect by which a project was judged eligible. Many buildings in east-central Colorado used this form of construction, including the gymnasiums/

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Figures 15 & 16: The Hugo Gymnasium in Lincoln County.

Top: during construction showing the adobe block.

Bottom: nearing completion, now covered with concrete.

Photos: National Records & Archives Administration, Still Photograph Collection.

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Figure 17: Top - Holly Gymnasium in Prowers County, built of Niobrara stone, a chalk-like substance soft enough to quarry with hand-saws, but which hardened upon exposure.

Photo: National Archives & Records Administration, Still Photograph Collection

Figure 18: Bottom – Two Buttes Gymnasium in Baca County, built of local sandstone.

Photo: Deon Wolfenbarger, September 2004.

The two gymnasiums demonstrate the effect of using locally quarried stone; they are 35 miles apart.

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community centers in Burlington and Stratton. The gymnasium at Hugo and the community center in Seibert were built utilizing a combination of adobe and reinforced concrete. Sometimes eastern Colorado projects utilized buildings materials salvaged from demolished structures. When the WPA demolished the Sedgwick County Courthouse in order to construct a new one, the materials salvaged from that demolition were reused to construct a county garage. Recycled building materials were again used to construct shop additions to two high schools in Sedgwick County.

WPA projects in eastern Colorado were simply designed, often by the local sponsor or occasionally by the regional WPA engineer. The styles for buildings were influenced either by local traditions or on the contemporary Art Deco, Moderne and Modernist styles. The small school districts of eastern Colorado during the Depression had no spare money to pay for professional architects, so they often turned to the state or district WPA staff for design support. In some instances, this led to some uniformity in design, such as the number of similar concrete gymnasiums in the east-central Colorado district (figures 14 and 17), which in turn contrasts with the quarried stone gymnasiums in the Baca-Kiowa-Prowers WPA sub-district (figures 15 and 16).



Figure 19: Stratton Gymnasium in Kit Carson County.

Photo: National Archives & Records Administration, Still Photograph Collection.

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Several small landscaping projects had been initiated under the CWA in eastern Colorado, since these types of projects required little match or advance planning on the part of the sponsor. The WPA continued these earlier efforts to enhance outdoor public places. Small parks, courthouse squares, and even cemeteries were “spruced up” on a small scale. Although rarer in eastern Colorado, occasionally larger designed park projects were also funded by the WPA. These feature stone structures and buildings features comparable to those built by the CCC in their parks projects, and reveal the extent that the National Park Service’s principles of design were influencing other regions. Parks, fairgrounds, and larger landscapes in the southern portion of the state show the influence of the area’s Spanish heritage, while others reflect the growing influence of “rustic park architecture.”



Figure 20: *The caretaker's residence at Willow Creek Park in Lamar, Prowers County, shows the influence of both rustic park architecture and the Pueblo Revival style.*
Photo: Deon Wolfenbarger, June 2004.

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WPA Art Deco

A favored contemporary style during the Depression years was *Art Deco*, which represented a complete break with the traditional designs of previous decades. Popular during the 1930s and 1940s, it is characterized by flat roofs with uneven cornice lines, stepped or set-back facades, a strong vertical emphasis and polychromatic materials. Stylized relief ornamentation was generally geometric, and included chevrons, zigzag, and geometric floral designs. In Art Deco examples built by federal relief programs, the stylistic details and form of the building are usually simpler and more restrained.



Figure 21: The Sedgwick County Courthouse exhibits the vertical orientation and simple ornamentation representative of WPA Art Deco.

Photo: Abbey Christman, June 2006.

WPA Moderne

Moderne, also referred to as Art Moderne, was similar to the Art Deco style in many ways. It also rejected traditional designs and emphasized a modern or futuristic appearance. Unlike the Art Deco style, though, it often lacked ornamentation. As applied to the WPA buildings of eastern Colorado, the character-defining features included flat or barrel roofs, smooth exterior surfaces, vertical fenestration openings, and linear building elements. Although horizontal lines were more typical of the Moderne style across the country, several of the “WPA Moderne” buildings feature vertical elements in conjunction with horizontal features. Vertical elements included tall narrow window openings that often terminated in a stepped parapet at the main elevation, while the horizontal elements were frequently grooved courses in an otherwise smooth concrete exterior surface. WPA



Figure 22: The Bath House at the Hugo Swimming Pool features the rounded corners and horizontal orientation of WPA Moderne.

Photo: State Historical Fund.

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Moderne buildings differ from other examples of this style in that they tended to be hand constructed rather than machine-tooled. Metal details are rare except in the use of window frames. Windows typically are "stock" variety, and not specifically designed for the building. Windows were often grouped in tall vertical sections to present a more modern appearance, however.

WPA Modernist

Modernist WPA designs reflect an attempt to keep building forms simple more than an expression of an overall design philosophy. Many of the defining characterizes of WPA Moderne are found in WPA Modernist buildings, including the lack of ornamentation, flat or barrel roofs, smooth exterior surfaces, vertical fenestration openings and linear building elements. These buildings often include vertical elements in conjunction with horizontal features. Vertical elements include tall narrow window openings that often terminate in a stepped parapet at the main elevation. Windows are often grouped in tall vertical sections to present a modern appearance. Where the Moderne is characterized by a horizontal or streamline effect with rounded edges and corners, Modernist buildings feature square corners. As in the WPA Moderne examples, hand construction is favored over the machine-tooled. Stone masonry involves rectangular, smooth-faced blocks with regular, usually sawed, edges. The Hugo Gymnasium exhibits the simple lines and window treatment typical of WPA Modernist design (figures 15 and 16).

WPA Rustic

Rustic architecture is typically associated with buildings and structures built by the National Park Service (NPS) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). The NPS played a prominent role in promoting this style or method of design, not only through its association with the Civilian Conservation Corps projects, but with the issuance of several publications in the 1930s. Many of the publications, or the designs of the structures within, were the creations of Herbert Maier. Maier was the landscape architect/architect who headed the NPS district that included Denver. Through the development of the NPS's design philosophy, he played a key role in promoting the principles of rustic park architecture during the 1920s and 1930s. Maier assembled design booklets containing examples of features built in a variety of national, state and local parks, with the explicit intent that these designs not be copied but instead adapted to the local topography, conditions, and cultural influences. He expected that there would be variations and diversity based on each site's unique cultural and natural history. The designs were therefore united by principle, not by architectural prototype.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷Linda Flint McClelland, *Building the National Parks*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998) pp. 391-392.

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Maier's principles were based on the use of native materials, and indigenous or "frontier" forms and construction methods. This design philosophy coincidentally meshed with the goals of the WPA relief work program. His basic design principles included: screening, the use of indigenous and native materials, adaptation of indigenous or frontier methods of construction, construction of buildings with low silhouettes and horizontal lines, avoidance of right angles and straight lines, and elimination of lines of demarcation between nature and built materials. For sites that were unable to provide either plant screening, or where it was impossible to hide the demarcation between the site and the building's foundations, he recommended designs with low silhouettes and horizontal lines, a low pitched roof, and colors that blended with the natural surroundings. Linda Flint McClelland notes in her study of National Park Service architecture that Maier believed "using indigenous or native materials, however, was the 'happiest means of blending the structure with its surroundings' and was the characteristic that popularly defined 'rustic architecture.'" ¹⁴⁸

Rustic architecture was meant to provide simple pragmatic solutions, following both function and nature. Federal relief buildings were also simple and functional. The use of native materials in many instances may have been an adaptation out of necessity and not choice, but it resulted in buildings and structures that reflected their natural surroundings. The NPS's principle of adapting indigenous or "frontier" construction methods (including the use of primitive tools) also coincided with Depression-era goals for relief construction projects. The objective of the WPA was to put as many people back to work as possible. This meant using hand tools instead of power tools wherever possible, and using hand labor instead of equipment. Both in NPS rustic and WPA construction, hand or "frontier" labor affected the patterns of masonry and design of bridges, culverts, and buildings.

The use of locally available construction materials in the National Parks was intended to help the project blend with nature; in WPA projects, local materials were used out of necessity. In both instances, this naturally meant that exterior appearance of buildings would vary in different locales. This was precisely what Maier hoped for in developing these design principles; his greatest fear was that all "rustic" buildings would look alike. Designs were meant to be varied for local topography and cultural influences. In dry areas with an abundance of rock, stone construction with little wood was appropriate. Different stones would require different quarrying and masonry techniques, and therefore not all Rustic style buildings have similar appearances. The caretaker's residence at Willow Creek Park in Lamar shows the influence of both the WPA Rustic style and the Pueblo Revival style.

A key distinction between Rustic architecture as practiced in most National Parks and the WPA Rustic resources is the demarcation between the building and the landscape. In the flat, treeless

¹⁴⁸Ibid, pp. 395-396.

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plains of eastern Colorado there was no opportunity to screen or “plant out” the base of the building. Utilizing natural contours, when there are virtually no contours, was also impossible. Most of these buildings did employ horizontal lines, flat roofs, and native materials, but many still stand out in their landscape setting. However, when one views the Rustic WPA buildings of southeastern Colorado in comparison with the Moderne concrete examples in the east central counties, the application of Rustic architecture principles becomes evident.

Appendix A:
Summary of Construction-Related New Deal Programs

The more familiar agencies that dealt with public works, the built environment, or conservation of the natural environment are summarized below:

New Deal Agency	Abbreviation	Established	Notes
Agricultural Adjustment Administration	AAA		
Civilian Conservation Corps	CCC	1933	
Civil Works Administration		1933	Absorbed by FERA on March 31, 1934
Farm Security Administration	FSA		Formerly the Resettlement Administration
Federal Art Project	FAP		
Federal Emergency Relief Administration	FERA	1933	Absorbed by the WPA
Federal Housing Administration	FHA		
Public Works Administration	PWA		
Rural Electrification Administration	REA		
Resettlement Administration	RA	1935	Became the Farm Security Administration
Soil Conservation Service	SCS		
Works Progress Administration	WPA		Renamed “Works Projects Administration” in 1939
U.S. Housing Authority	USHA		

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Appendix B:

Additional New Deal Programs and Policies (non-construction)

- Minimum wage laws
- 40-hour work week
- Right to form unions
- Outlawed child labor
- Created unemployment insurance for workers
- Created worker and plant safety laws
- Created welfare and aid to families with dependent children
- Created public housing for the homeless
- Increased progressive taxation of the wealthy and corporations
- Created Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation to protect bank deposits
- Created new laws to regulate banking to prevent bank failures
- Creation of the Securities and Exchange Commission to regulate the stock market
- Created new laws to regulate the economy and large, national corporations.
- Created Social Security system to support the elderly
- Created system of parity and government support for farmers
- Created rural electrification programs
- Created government support for culture and the arts

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Appendix C
CCC Camps in Colorado

The following tables were taken from Robert Bruce Parham, "The Civilian Conservation Corps in Colorado, 1933-1942," (Masters Thesis, University of Colorado, 1981); in turn, that information was taken from U.S. Army, Eighth Corps Area, "Civilian Conservation Corps, Eighth Corps Area, Status Record of CCC Camps Authorized Since Inception of the Program Up To and Including December 31, 1941," Compiled by Office of Liaison Officer, CCC, Eighth Corps Area, Fort Sam Houston, Texas, Container 111, Record Group 49, Federal Archives and Records Center, Denver, Colorado. Many of these camps were located outside the geographic area covered by this multiple property document.

Camp Prefix Designation

Camp Designation	Land Ownership	Supervising Agency
BR	Federal Reclamation Projects	Bureau of Reclamation
DG (G)	Public Domain	Division of Grazing "Drought Relief Camps"
DF	National Forest	U.S. Forest Service
DNP	National Park	National Park Service
DPE	Private Land	U.S. Forest Service
DSP	Municipal Park	National Park Service
F	National Forest	U.S. Forest Service
MA	Municipal Park	National Park Service
NM	National Monument	National Park Service
NP	National Park	National Park Service
P	Private Forest	U.S. Forest Service
PE	Unknown	National Park Service
SCS	Private Land	Soil Conservation Service
SP	Municipal Park	National Park Service

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Camp	Camp Name	Post Office
BR-22	Grand Valley	Grand Junction
BR-23	Montrose	Montrose
BR-55	Palisade	Palisade
BR-59	Mesa	Palisade
BR-71	Uncompahgre	Montrose
BR-81	Vallecito (Pine River)	Bayfield
BR-93	Mancos	Mancos
BR-94	Mancos	Mancos
DF-46	San Isabel	Gardner
DF-48	Norwood	Norwood
DG-1	Massadona	Massadona
DG-2	Grand Junction	Grand Junction
DG-8	Meeker	Meeker
DG-9	Kline or Mad Mesa	Durango
DG-10	Montrose	Montrose
DG-11	Redvale	Redvale
DG-65	Massadona	Skull Creek
DG-79	Gunnison	Gunnison
DG-80	Walden	Walden
DG-81	Two Bar Ranch	Sunbeam
DG-107	Piceance Creek	Meeker
DG-125	Paradox	Paradox
DG-139	Saguache	Saguache
DG-140	Green	Baggs, Wyoming
DNP-5	Mesa Verde #1	Mesa Verde
DPE-201	Fountain	Colorado Springs
DPE-203	Franktown	Castle Rock
DSP-1	Greeley Park	Greeley
DSP-2	Durango	Durango
DSP-3	Palmer Park	Colorado Springs
F-1	Peaceful Valley	Peaceful Valley
F-2	Little South	Eggers
F-4(old site)	Michigan	Walden
F-4(new site)	Parkview	Granby
F-5	Elk River	Steamboat
F-6	Marvine	Marvine
F-7	Blue River	Dillon
F-8	Tabernash	Tabernash
F-10	Bailey	Bailey

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Camp	Camp Name	Post Office
F-11	Chicago Creek	Idaho Springs
F-13	Lake George	Lake George
F-14	Saylor Park	Woodland Park
F-15	Tigiwon	Minturn
F-16(old site)	Mesa	Skyway
F-16(new site)	Trickle Park	Cedaredge
F-17	Lands End	Whitewater
F-19	Waunita	Pitkin
F-20	Pitkin	Pitkin
F-23	Tomichi	Sargents
F-24	Trout Creek	Buena Vista
F-26	Hardscrabble	Florence
F-27	Divide	Delta
F-28	Glade	Dolores
F-29	Blanco	Pagosa Springs
F-30	Conejos-Alamosa	Alamosa
F-31	Buffalo	Buffalo
F-32	Cascade	Cascade
F-33	Manitou	Manitou
F-35	Lenado	Woody Creek
F-38	Bear River	Yampa
F-40	Stunner	Alamosa
F-46	Huerfano	Huerfano
F-48	Norwood	Norwood
F-49	South Fork	South Fork
F-50	Red Feather	Red Feather Lakes
F-51	Norrie	Meredith
F-52	Canadian	Fort Collins
F-53	Lone Dome	Dolores
F-54	Eagle	Eagle
F-55	St. Charles	Pueblo
F-56	Bayfield	Bayfield
F-57	Millwood	Mancos
F-58	Bear Creek	Golden
F-59	Isabel	Rye
F-60	Jackson	Monument
F-61	Poudre	Fort Collins
F-62	Boulder	Boulder
F-63	Idaho Springs	Idaho Springs
F-64	Woodland	Woodland Park

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Camp	Camp Name	Post Office
F-65	Glenwood	Glenwood Springs
F-66	Chambers Lake	Ft. Collins
F-67	Coon Creek	Mesa
F-68	Yeoman Park	Eagle
F-69	Taylor Park	Almont
F-71	Gunnison	Gunnison
G-2	Grand Junction	Grand Junction
G-11	Redvale	Redvale
G-65	Massadona	Skull Creek
G-79	Gunnison	Gunnison
G-80	Walden	Walden
G-81	Two Bar Ranch	Sunbeam
G-107	Piceance Creek	Meeker
G-125	Paradox	Paradox
G-139	Saguache	Saguache
G-140	Green	Baggs, Wyoming
G-181	Parkdale	Parkdale
MA-1	Red Rocks Metro Park	Mt. Morrison
MA-2	Genessee Metro Park #1	Golden
NM-1-C-#1	Glade Park	Grand Junction
NM-1-C-#2	Grand Junction	Grand Junction
NM-2	Colorado National Monument Headquarters	Colorado Springs
NM-3-C-#1	Grand Junction	Grand Junction
NM-3-C-#2	Fruita	Grand Junction
NP-1	Horseshoe Park	Estes Park
NP-2	Maintenance	Mancos
NP-3	Grand Lake	Grand Lake
NP-4	Mill Creek	Estes Park
NP-5	Mesa Verde #1	Mesa Verde
NP-6	Mesa Verde #2	Mesa Verde
NP-7	Grand Lake	Grand Lake
NP-8	Colorado National Monument #1	Grand Junction
NP-9	Colorado National Monument #2	Grand Junction
NP-11	Rocky Mountain National Park (Mill Creek #1)	Estes Park
NP-12-#2	Grand Lake	Grand Lake
NP-13	Mancos	Mancos
P-204	Bear Creek	Golden
PE-204	Bear Creek	Golden
SCS-1	Trinidad	Trinidad
SCS-2	Burnt Mill	Pueblo

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Camp	Camp Name	Post Office
SCS-3	Hugo	Hugo
SCS-4	Cheyenne Wells	Cheyenne Wells
SCS-5	Springfield	Springfield
SCS-6	Templeton Gap or Fountain	Colorado Springs
SCS-7	Franktown	Castle Rock
SCS-8	Wellington or Buckeye	Wellington
SCS-9	Elbert	Elbert
SCS-10	Durango	Durango
SCS-11	Grand Junction	Grand Junction
SCS-12	Fruita	Grand Junction
SCS-13	Capulin or Monte Vista	La Jara
SCS-14	Cortez	Cortez
SCS-15	Sterling	Sterling
SCS-16	Horse Creek	Kutch
SCS-17	Colorado State Forest	Gould
SCS-18	Huerfano	Gardner
SCS-19	Elkhead Creek	Craig
SP-1	Boulder Mountain Metro Park #1	Nederland
SP-2	Boulder Mountain Metro Park #2	Boulder
SP-3	Denver Mountain Metro Park #1	Fort Logan
SP-4	Denver Mountain Metro Park #2	Fort Logan
SP-5	Boulder Mountain Metro Park #3	Boulder
SP-6	Pueblo Mountain Metro Park	Pueblo
SP-7	Rifle Mountain Metro Park	Rifle
SP-8	American Legion County Park	Trinidad
SP-9	Loveland Mountain Metro Park	Loveland
SP-10	Lookout Mountain Metro Park	Glenwood Springs
SP-11	Monument Lake Metro Park	Trinidad
SP-12	Palmer Metro Park	Colorado Springs
SP-13	Denver Mountain Metro Park #3	Mt. Morrison
SP-14	Denver Mountain Metro Park #4	Golden
SP-15	Fort Collins Mountain Metro Park	Fort Collins
SP-16	Durango Metro Park	Durango
SP-17	Cub Creek Metro Park	Evergreen
SP-18	Genessee Metro Park #2	Genessee

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Appendix D
*Non-federal PWA projects in Eastern Colorado**

County	City	Project
Bent	Bent County	School addition
Bent	Bent County	School
Bent	Las Animas	Irrigation
Bent	Las Animas	Irrigation
Bent	Las Animas	School improvement
Bent	Las Animas	Irrigation
Cheyenne	Cheyenne Wells	Waterworks
Cheyenne	Cheyenne Wells	Sanitary sewer
Cheyenne	Cheyenne Wells	Sanitary sewer
Cheyenne	Kit Carson	Waterworks
Cheyenne	Kit Carson	Electric plant
Crowley	Olney Springs	Municipal improvement
Crowley	Olney Springs	Drainage
Crowley	Ordway	Waterworks
El Paso	Calhan (Callahan)	High school
El Paso	El Paso County	Bridge
El Paso	Falcon	School addition
Kiowa	Eads	Sanitary sewer
Kiowa	Eads	Disposal plant
Kit Carson	Burlington	Swimming pool
Kit Carson	Burlington	School
Kit Carson	Burlington	School improvement
Lincoln	Hugo	Reservoirs

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County	City	Project
Lincoln	Limon	Water tank
Logan	Fleming	School
Logan	Sterling	Storm sewer
Logan	Sterling	Reservoir
Morgan	Fort Morgan	Power improvement
Morgan	Fort Morgan	Fire - police
Morgan	Fort Morgan	Courthouse
Morgan	Fort Morgan	Power improvement
Morgan	Morgan County	Auditorium - gymnasium
Otero	Fowler	Reservoir
Otero	La Junta	School addition
Otero	La Junta	Waterworks
Otero	Manzanola	Pump station
Otero	Swink	Waterworks
Otero	Swink	School improvement
Otero	Swink	Well pump
Phillips	Haxtun	Gymnasium
Phillips	Holyoke	Courthouse
Phillips	Holyoke	Town hall
Prowers	Granada	Sanitary sewer
Prowers	Lamar	Power improvement
Pueblo	Boone	Waterworks
Sedgwick	Julesburg	Waterworks
Sedgwick	Julesburg	Library
Washington	Akron	Auditorium - gymnasium

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County	City	Project
Washington	Akron	Courthouse addition
Weld	Brighton	School improvement
Weld	Brighton	Disposal plant
Weld	Brighton	Courthouse addition
Weld	Brighton	School
Weld	Dacono	Waterworks
Weld	Evans	Filter plant
Weld	Fort Lupton	Disposal plant
Weld	Frederick	Waterworks
Weld	Greeley	Housing
Weld	Greeley	Dorms
Weld	Greeley	Disposal plant
Weld	Greeley	School addition
Weld	Greeley	School
Weld	Greeley	Library
Weld	Greeley	Hospital addition
Weld	Greeley	Normal school
Weld	Greeley	University improvement
Weld	Greeley	University building
Weld	Greeley	Fire department
Weld	Greeley	University improvement
Weld	Greeley	School improvement
Weld	Grover	Power - waterworks
Weld	Johnstown	Pipe line
Weld	La Salle	Electric district

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County	City	Project
Weld	Platteville	Auditorium - gymnasium
Weld	Timnath	School repairs
Weld	Windsor	Watermains
Weld	Windsor	School improvement
Yuma	Yuma	Watermains
Yuma	Yuma	Power - waterworks

**Does not include the projects in front range communities in Las Animas, Pueblo, El Paso, Arapahoe, or Adams counties.*

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ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES

The New Deal property types include buildings, structures, objects, sites and districts associated with the federal relief construction on Colorado's eastern plains during the 1933-1943 New Deal era. While examples of many of these property types may also be found throughout all of Colorado, this submission is confined to the eastern plains. This document is based in part on a survey of four eastern Colorado counties—Baca, Kit Carson, Prowers, and Sedgwick. As such, information about some property types is limited. Future survey of New Deal resources may add to or alter the knowledge about the property types that follow or may reveal information about new property types. (See Section H for additional discussion about possible future amendments.)

The property types are primarily based on original function. This system of classification reflects the original categories at the time of their construction as used by the New Deal federal agencies. The classifications remain viable today. While representatives of each property type share similar physical features based on their function, all of the New Deal property types share some common attributes, particularly in the areas of significance and registration requirements. In the interest of preventing repetition, the common attributes are discussed first.

Significance – General

New Deal built resources on Colorado's eastern plains are significant under Criterion A in the areas of *politics/government* and *social history* and for their association with President Franklin Roosevelt's legislative agenda to rescue the United States from the Great Depression. Referred to as the "New Deal," this agenda included the creation of an unprecedented number of policies, programs, and agencies to provide relief, employment, conserve natural resources, and initiate construction of public works—all in the hopes of stimulating the devastated economy. The built resources that resulted from these programs are thus not only significant for their association with Roosevelt's great social experiment, but may also be significant in the area of *economics* for their fiscal impact in local communities during the depression era. Some resources may also be significant in the areas relating to their original and long-term function, such as *politics/government, education, entertainment/recreation* or *transportation*. These latter associations extend beyond the scope of this document.

The 1930s were also a time of extreme drought, dust storms, and agricultural depression in eastern Colorado. Numerous programs inaugurated by President Roosevelt's New Deal provided not only direct relief for the desperate citizens of the plains but also sought to conserve and restore natural resources devastated by the Dust Bowl. Several New Deal programs directly or indirectly focused their activities on stabilizing and restoring the plains farm and range lands of eastern Colorado. The conservation projects still influence current agricultural and environmental practices. Properties associated with these activities may be eligible under Criterion A in the area of *conservation*.

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While many argue the relative success of individual programs or the New Deal as a whole in relieving the conditions of the Depression, it was undeniably the most important period of federal government legislation in the twentieth century. The public works jobs helped families as well as communities survive during the Depression years and provided an infrastructure that would not have otherwise been built. The physical resources that remain speak to the determination of eastern Coloradans to survive the Depression years, and to the federal government programs that were developed to help them do so. Therefore in both the areas of *social history, politics/government* and *economics* the public buildings, structures, and sites constructed as a result of the work relief programs are significant as legacies of not only the Roosevelt's unprecedented social relief "experiments" but also for their positive impact on local economies.

New Deal resources may be eligible under Criterion C in the areas of *architecture, community planning and development, engineering, or landscape architecture* if they embody the distinctive characteristics of a type or method of construction associated with the New Deal relief-era programs. This includes designs emphasizing the use of hand labor and craftsmanship; the use of either local or inexpensive building materials or construction methods (to free up more money for labor); the use of standardized plans, especially in rural communities with no access to professional designers; and regional versions of popular styles or forms.

In the areas of *architecture, engineering or landscape architecture*, New Deal resources are significant for the distinctive design or construction characteristics which are associated with federal work relief projects. The resources' craftsmanship, materials, construction methods and sometimes plans are reflective of their origin as a public works projects planned to provide economic and unemployment relief during the Great Depression. In many smaller communities, they are the best examples of a particular architectural style or construction method during the 1930s, and in fact, may have been the only buildings or structures of significance that were constructed during this period. The buildings may exhibit the architectural styles and variations typical of some New Deal programs. These styles include Art Deco, Moderne, Modernist, and Rustic.

In addition to architectural significance, a few resources may be eligible under Criterion B if they have associations with a person who played an important role in the New Deal in Colorado or the nation. Resources eligible under Criterion D have not yet been identified, but might qualify if they are able to yield important information related to the New Deal in eastern Colorado. Examples of this might include abandoned CCC camps or conservation resources, which are either rare or are poorly documented.

Registration Requirements – General

To be eligible under Criterion A in the area of *social history, politics/government or economics*, the New Deal resources must have been financed or constructed by one of the programs developed as part of Roosevelt's New Deal relief efforts. The period of significance begins in 1933

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with the initiation of these programs in Colorado, and ends in 1942, when three of the major construction programs were terminated.

All resources with a strong association with the construction programs of the New Deal will be eligible under Criterion A if they retain sufficient integrity. Integrity of design, materials, and workmanship are generally the most critical, as they relate to the specific attributes that are associated with the New Deal construction programs. Integrity of feeling and association are more intangible and difficult to measure, but are generally present when other areas of integrity are high. Original location is generally critical, except for certain property types. These exceptions are listed within the discussion for those property types.

Although a variety of property types were constructed during the New Deal era, all eligible resources must retain integrity of key character-defining elements. The following are important to convey integrity of design: mass, form, plan, structural elements, and fenestration patterns. Mass and form may be affected by additions to a building or changes to the roof shape. The latter significantly reduces integrity of design, but additions do not seriously lessen integrity if they are not on the primary elevation, are set back from the primary elevation on a side, or are located to the rear. Furthermore, they must not have overwhelmed the original building's massing. This is generally interpreted as the additions being smaller in mass and height, or being unnoticeable from the public right-of-way. Wall cladding materials, which are almost always associated with the history of the work relief program, also reflect the original design intent; they are clearly a character-defining feature that must be present. The addition of new materials or architectural ornaments or features will generally significantly reduce integrity of design. Examples of later, inappropriate features detracting from the original, simple designs are porches, architectural trims or ornamentation, and roof or cornice line features. Any other features which are considered character-defining to a particular style or type should remain. Window openings should be intact, but the replacement of original windows and doors is not as critical for the *social history* associations of New Deal resources. Temporary boarding over of the openings does not reduce integrity if the original fenestration pattern remains clearly visible. Enlarged window openings, particularly on the primary elevations, significantly reduce the original design integrity. Finally, those design elements that may distinguish the building's original use, even if the function has changed over the years, are critical for eligibility purposes.

Materials key to interpreting the resource's association with a federal work relief program are critical. Retention of primary wall cladding material is important, as this usually reflects the local sponsor's ability to provide the required match for the federal program, as well as the types of construction materials that were readily available to them. The choices of materials also sometimes suggest which New Deal program was involved with funding the resource. PWA projects were allowed to spend a higher proportion of the costs on materials than were WPA projects, where the funds were spent predominantly on labor. However, in all buildings it was necessary to purchase some features ready-made. For WPA projects, windows, doors, and other types of

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pre-manufactured features are not as critical to measuring integrity of materials, as these do not directly relate to the purpose of the program to provide jobs for unemployed local workers. In PWA projects, however, where the purchase of construction materials was intended to “prime the pump” of the economy, integrity of these materials is more important.

Integrity of workmanship is also critical because of the aforementioned emphasis on the use of hand labor. Evidence of the workers’ skills should be retained, which in many cases should not be interpreted to mean “fine” or “highly skilled” craftsmanship. In fact, WPA projects were not approved for funding if the percentage of skilled workers was too high. Masons and bricklayers were considered to be skilled workers; yet many WPA bridges and buildings were still constructed of stone. These projects started out with workers who did not possess construction skills. Instead, the WPA projects were learning laboratories for various building trades and skills. It would not be uncommon for the workers’ abilities to progress from the start of construction to the end of a single building, or from one small bridge to the next. Evidence of the type of workmanship, of either unskilled or skilled labor, is therefore critical to adequately interpret the scope and purpose of the New Deal work relief programs. Changes that altered this evidence may render a resource ineligible.

Integrity of setting is particularly critical for those New Deal projects that specifically dealt with the design, improvement, or construction of landscape features as part of the overall project. However, for many smaller or simple projects, the setting is less critical. There should be no major changes in topography, although vegetation changes are not critical. For example, schools may have the addition of modern playground equipment or, in the case of abandoned schools, may be in a field which has reverted back to crops. Neither of these instances would be sufficient loss of integrity to render these resources ineligible should the aspects of design, materials, and workmanship remain high.

As with all buildings, location is an important aspect of integrity because the relationship between a resource and its historic associations is usually destroyed when the resource is moved. In the case of New Deal resources, the local sponsor planned projects in order to provide jobs for local citizens, as well as to improve or construct needed public works. Projects had to be built on publicly owned land owned by the sponsor. Removal of the resource from the original location destroys that association. A resource moved from its original location, however may still be eligible if it meets the standards for Criteria Consideration B as properties significant under special circumstances. Additionally, a few resources were built with the intention of their removal after the New Deal project was completed – specifically, the temporary housing at work relief camps. This particularly applies to the portable CCC barracks; more information regarding this aspect of integrity for these resources will be found in the discussion of this property type.

Integrity in the aspects of feeling and association are more subjective in nature, and are generally dependent on individual perceptions. A high level of integrity in design, materials, and work-

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manship, especially when combined with integrity of setting, usually will convey a sense of historic character and will relay its association with the historic context. Although it is often difficult to anticipate these instances, any alterations that significantly impacted or destroyed the sense of feeling or association may render a resource ineligible.

PROPERTY TYPE: *Civic and Government Buildings***Description**

Civic and government buildings from the New Deal era were built for local, county, state, or federal levels of government. They were built to house the operations necessary for the functions of those governments and include town or city halls, courthouses, police and fire stations, and buildings for federal agencies, such as post offices. As noted in the general registration requirements, depending on the New Deal agency responsible for the funding of the resource's construction, there may be differences in the designer's level of expertise, in the amount of skilled labor used on the project, and in the total money spent on materials. Civic and government buildings can be further categorized by distinctions based on function. Some of the most common subtypes built by New Deal agencies in eastern Colorado are listed below.

Subtype: *Municipal Buildings*

City and town halls not only housed the employees, offices, and records of local government, but the buildings were also important reflections of a community's status. As such, they were planned to present an appearance of permanence and stability. Since most of the towns in eastern Colorado were in desperate financial situation during the years of the Depression, there was not much room for extravagant designs or features. Reflective of the planning for permanence, the preferred building materials were stone, brick, and concrete, which were used in simply designed buildings with little extra architectural ornamentation. The PWA funded construction of only one town hall in eastern Colorado (Holyoke). The PWA also constructed a fire department building in Greeley, and a fire/police building in Fort Morgan. The WPA constructed the remainder of New Deal municipal buildings in eastern Colorado, such as the two-story Moderne city administration building in Eads. By the nature of this latter New Deal program, the majority of New Deal municipal buildings in eastern Colorado are small. The styles are simple adaptations of contemporary modern trends in architecture, or reflect regional vernacular building traditions. These were typically one-story buildings, many with flat roofs for ease of construction. Building materials were generally those that could be found locally, such as the "Niobrara" stone for the Holly City Hall (National Register listed). At the time of construction, WPA officials praised the soft, chalk-like stone for its ease in quarrying and subsequent stability:

The unusual feature of this structure is the white, chalk-like limestone of which all outside walls are constructed. When first taken from the quarry, this stone is soft

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enough to be cut with a power saw. . . . Upon being exposed to the air, this material loses its chalk-like quality and becomes hard and weather resistant, suitable for a permanent building. After the stone has weathered, it turns light yellow.¹

In reality, the soft stone probably would not have been the building material of first choice if the depressed economic conditions had not limited the town's budget.

Most city halls contained offices necessary to managing the affairs of the local community. A few sometimes contained other uses, such as police and/or fire stations, jails, and libraries. Town and city halls were generally located on a primary business street in the original platted section of town.

Subtype: Courthouses

The PWA and WPA were both involved in county courthouse construction in eastern Colorado. These designs tend to be less standardized than other federal relief projects, which reflect the typically higher cost of the projects. Even if the WPA was responsible for funding the construction of courthouses, county governments could take advantage of progressive phasing of a courthouse project, thereby spending more than the WPA's limit of \$25,000. As with municipal buildings and reflective of the building's permanence and importance to the county, primary building materials included brick, stone, and concrete. Generally, more attention was paid to the detailing of a courthouse. Architectural details and ornamentation often included terra cotta tiles, terrazzo floors, and marble. Courthouses are also noted for their massing and form. They are generally two to three stories tall, sit on raised foundations and usually feature a centrally placed main entry on a symmetrical facade. Public lobbies, offices, courtrooms, and judges' chambers were typically included in the interior configurations. Additions to existing courthouses were still massive, generally two stories, and constructed out of brick, stone, or concrete. However, the additions may be simpler and not necessarily constructed in a style similar to the original courthouse building. Courthouse additions often housed jails and additional offices. The PWA constructed additions to the courthouses in Akron and Brighton, while the WPA built an addition to the Baca County courthouse in Springfield. New courthouses rose in Holyoke and Julesburg; the former funded by the PWA and the latter constructed by the WPA.

Subtype: Post Offices

The PWA funded federal post office construction during the Depression years, resulting in the construction of 406 post office buildings nationwide. The responsibility for the design and con-

¹This quote is referring to the construction of the Holly Gymnasium, which was constructed of the same material. WPA Photo Card, project 1498 and 2145, Federal No. 65-84-1718 and 165-84-2527. Western History and Genealogy Division, Denver Public Library. "WPA Photo Albums."

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struction of post offices fell to the office of the Supervising Architect within the Treasury Department. Designs during this period exhibited greater stylistic variety not only from previous periods of post office design, but also from the locally sponsored New Deal construction projects. Styles used for post office construction could reflect classical inspirations, or some variation of regional architecture. The design of the post office in Lamar, for example, reflects the Spanish or Mission Revival influence. The amount of ornamentation and type of building materials, however, was partly predetermined by the amount of receipts that the particular post office brought in annually. Despite the classification of the post office size, most included lobby spaces, window counters, and large work rooms for the sorting and distribution processes.

Significance

Many communities in eastern Colorado traced their roots to the post-1859 Gold Rush period and to the later construction of railroads. Other eastern Colorado communities had been recently established by the time of the 1930's Depression. For example, the town of Walsh in Baca County received a post office and achieved incorporated status in 1926. Several communities had not moved much beyond the buildings erected shortly after the town's founding. For some communities, the Depression offered a chance to improve and expand their civic and government facilities. As noted previously, these buildings may be eligible under Criterion A in the areas of *social history* and *economics*. Some civic and government buildings may also be significant in the areas of *community planning and development* and *politics/government*. The federal assistance received by the smaller communities in eastern Colorado to improve or construct new civic and government buildings was critical in helping improve or expand their government functions.

In many of the rural towns in eastern Colorado, the courthouse or town hall is the most prominent building. Some of these civic and government buildings may also be eligible under Criterion C in the area of *architecture*. Many were architect-designed, and may therefore be good examples of their work due to the attention usually afforded civic buildings. Others, particularly town halls for the smaller towns or additions to existing buildings, were simpler and represent the requirements of the associated New Deal funding agency. WPA buildings, for example, are significant for the use of hand labor and local materials, but generally lack extensive architectural ornamentation. This is a hallmark of Depression-era construction where the main goal of the work relief program was to put as many of the unemployed back to work as possible.

Post office construction was influenced more by federal legislation and funding bills than by local economic circumstances, although the onset of the Depression certainly had a significant impact on the implementation of the prior Public Buildings Act of 1926. This bill attempted to remove pork-barrel practices where the size and ornament of public buildings were determined by political favoritism. With public buildings legislation in the first decades of the twentieth century, standardized classifications were recommended for post office construction, based on the office's annual receipts for the previous year. Class designations from A through D determined

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the amount allocated for construction and the types of materials allowed for the building and its ornamentation. The highest class of buildings could use marble or granite facing on the exterior, with interior finishes to include marble, ornamental bronze work or mahogany. For Class D buildings, post offices that had annual receipts of less than \$15,000, the exterior could only have brick facing with little stone or terra cotta ornamentation. Only the first floor could be fireproof, and the windows and doors were to be standard stock.²

Although several post offices had been planned for construction in the late 1920s, the Depression halted most federal building programs until the Public Works Administration received appropriations. Federal PWA projects were totally funded by these allocations and the responsible agency contracted the work. For post offices, this responsibility remained with the Treasury Department. Although post office construction followed the guidelines set up by early federal legislation, it was still influenced by the economic conditions of the 1930s. Some economies of construction were applied. Federal New Deal art projects often supplied the ornamentation, although no examples were funded for eastern Colorado.

Registration Requirements

In addition to the previously noted general registration requirements for associations with a New Deal construction program, a civic or government building may be eligible under Criterion A in the area of *government/politics* if it represents a new, modern facility which provided expanded programs, community services, or the ability to better conduct the business of the governing body. In these instances, floor plans or interior space configuration would be an important aspect of design integrity. For examples of civic or government buildings which are eligible under Criterion C, the key character-defining features which are distinctive characteristics of a building type, architectural styles, or period of construction are critical. Ornamentation that represents the work of a master or possesses high artistic values should also be intact.

PROPERTY TYPE: *Educational Buildings***Description**

Both the WPA and PWA not only constructed new educational buildings, but made numerous improvements to existing buildings. Nationwide, the WPA built 8,081 new schools or additions to existing schools; in Colorado, there were 113 of these WPA projects. An additional 381 schools in the state were repaired or renovated by the WPA, compared to 31,316 across the coun-

²Paul Secord and H. James Kolva, "U.S. Post Offices in Colorado, 1900-1941," National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form. Section 8, pp. 11-12.

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try.³ The PWA funded the construction of numerous schools, although the majority of primary and secondary schools were in larger towns. The PWA also was involved in new construction and additions to college and university buildings. Libraries and museums were less frequently constructed by New Deal agencies on the plains of eastern Colorado, in part because these communities had more pressing community and educational needs.

Subtype: *Primary and Secondary School Facilities*

School building was a major focus of New Deal construction projects. Prior to the Depression, schools in eastern Colorado were generally in poor shape. Many school districts had been unable to keep up with the enrollment growth of the first three decades of the twentieth century. The Depression halted all hopes of new construction, and existing schools fell into disrepair. Many rural schools were unsafe, crowded, and outdated. Throughout the state, the WPA, along with the PWA, made significant inroads in solving the school construction problem. Furthermore, FERA and CWA work programs undertook many repair and maintenance projects. In eastern Colorado, the PWA funded new schools, additions, and/or improvements in Bent County, Brighton, Burlington, Callahan, Falcon, Fleming, Greeley, La Junta, Timnath, Swink, Walsenburg and Windsor. The WPA was more involved with school construction, either building new schools, additions, or improving buildings in Cheyenne Wells, Campo, Deora, Edler, Granada, Hartman, Holly, Kim, Kit Carson County, Konantz, Hugo, La Salle, Pritchett, Sedgwick County, Springfield, Stratton, Two Buttes, Utleyville, Vilas, Walsh, and Wiley. This is just a partial sampling of the school-related buildings constructed by the WPA in eastern Colorado.

In addition to school buildings, accessory buildings, such as shops and bus garages, were also constructed by New Deal relief agencies. Playgrounds and other improvements to school grounds were also popular projects, as their construction usually did not require much skill or training. Several playground and landscaping projects were undertaken by National Youth Administration workers, many of whom attended school on the grounds which they were improving. No records of specific playground improvements were found to date; future research may provide additional information on this type of New Deal cultural landscape.

Small one- or two-room schools were generally built by the WPA, using plans consistent with nationally applied standards during the 1930s. Because of the requirement for a small match to the WPA grant, the designs were often ingenious in allowing poor communities to contribute to the project while still providing a modern educational facility. Utilizing either building materials on hand or those cheaply attained, a school might employ modest elements of Spanish or Pueblo Revival due to its construction of adobe bricks, or feature a more "rustic" appearance from the use of locally quarried stone. Materials recycled from the demolition of other buildings were

³*Final Report on the WPA Program*, pp. 135-136.

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also used in school construction. Although the plans of these small schools might be similar, their exterior appearance might vary widely, depending upon the local materials and building traditions in various locals in eastern Colorado.

The smaller schools were typically one-story rectangular-plan buildings. Small entry vestibules might either be centrally located on the front elevation or set off to one side. Sometimes there was an additional room on the building's front containing the cloak room. Wood frame buildings had either gable or hip roofs, while masonry and adobe schools featured flat roofs. There were either a few small windows or no windows on the north elevation and several large windows on the opposite side. This fenestration arrangement provided better lighting (and thus relieving eyestrain), more blackboard space, and reduced heat loss during the winter. The schools often had basements characterized by a large open space that could be used for recreation during bad weather.

Nationwide, the PWA financed 6,282 educational buildings, comprising more than seventy percent of that agency's non-federal projects. The PWA required extensive planning for new schools not only in the physical design of the buildings but in projections that accounted for shifts in population, future needs, modern equipment (such as heating systems), and space for "progressive" facilities such as auditoriums, gymnasiums, libraries, shops, cafeterias, art and music rooms, and laboratories. Through its influence in the application stage, the PWA nationwide also helped the movement toward consolidation of school districts. Sometimes the PWA referred applications to the state departments of education, thus influencing consolidation when states were amenable. Some of the larger PWA educational buildings, therefore, were built for consolidated schools. The PWA also provided legal expertise for the formation of new school districts and financial expertise to help with new methods of funding.⁴ PWA school buildings tended to be larger than those built by the WPA, and in general, were located in larger communities. Whereas many rural WPA schools were built using local materials and plans prepared by the WPA's district architect or engineer, each PWA school project hired an architect from the private sector to prepare plans.

Larger school buildings constructed by New Deal programs were either masonry (stone or brick) or concrete, and typically had flat or barrel roofs. These buildings more often incorporated modest decorative elements suggestive of the Moderne Style, although some show the influence of Rustic architecture. Those containing gymnasiums had large, central open spaces with high ceilings, a stage at one end, and fixed seating or balconies at the sides. Locker and shower rooms were typically in the basement, and classrooms or offices were located at one end or on either side. School gymnasium buildings actually performed two purposes: providing a gymna-

⁴ *America Builds*, pp. 130-134.

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sium and classrooms for the local school district and serving as a community center for the surrounding area. Some of these buildings, therefore, may also be classified under the *Recreational and Cultural Resources* property type.

Additions to school buildings were also common New Deal projects, usually combination gymnasiums/auditoriums. These additions were not always constructed to match the original school facility, although the shop/garage building added to the Sedgwick County High School in Sedgwick did employ similar materials to the original 1920 building. Generally, due to the cost of materials, school additions in eastern Colorado “made do” with the least expensive and most readily available construction materials. In Campo, an adobe addition was added to a frame school building, and in Hartman, a gymnasium built of the soft, chalk-like Niobrara stone was added to the existing brick school. Additional projects were often undertaken to meet other student needs. Landscaping projects included playground construction, beautification of grounds with shrubs and trees, and athletic fields.

Subtype: *College and University Buildings*

College and university buildings, although less commonly found in this study area, were also built on Colorado's eastern plains by federal relief programs during the Depression. Larger campuses were improved following plans developed by the newly formed Statewide Planning Commission. Initially conceived as PWA projects, some were eventually built as combined projects which also utilized WPA workers and funding. This sub-type includes classroom buildings, administration buildings, dormitories, and recreational facilities. Large buildings often had double-loaded corridors with many rooms on both sides of the hallways. Small faculty or office rooms may also have been included. Dormitories also generally featured double-loaded corridors with student residential quarters on both sides of the halls. Additionally, there were public spaces such as restrooms, lounge areas, kitchen and dining rooms, and a lobby. These buildings were usually multi-story, symmetrical, and constructed of masonry. PWA educational buildings in Colorado were approvingly noted in the publication *Public Buildings: Architecture Under the Public Works Administrations 1933-1939* for their stylistic references to regional architecture and building materials.

Additions to existing buildings were also constructed for college buildings. Some of these were less substantial or “formal” in comparison to those made at the larger campuses. In Lamar, for example, locally quarried stone was used in a WPA project to add space to the empty tuberculosis clinic in order to make the building functional as the newly formed Southeastern Colorado Junior College.

Subtype: *Libraries and Museums*

Few examples of this sub-type of educational buildings were constructed by New Deal agencies, but those that were represent important landmarks in the development of community life in east-

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ern Colorado. The Moderne style library in Julesburg is an example of the significance of the role played by the New Deal in the betterment of the community. This library had been planned for many years with land set aside directly across the street from the Sedgwick County Courthouse. Until the federal Depression-relief programs developed by the Roosevelt administration, the local residents had been unable to find the money to finance the construction of a library. With federal relief funds available for construction, the Julesburg Women's Club was able to hire Denver architect Stanley Morse to prepare the plans for the library. Using the ingenuity and "can-do" attitude typical during the Depression, two women from the club enlisted the aid of a WPA truck and driver to accompany them to a site along the Big Thompson River near Estes Park, where they selected rocks which were later fashioned into a fireplace for the library.

As prominent buildings in a community, examples of this property type typically exhibited characteristics indicating additional care in planning and/or design, whether in the form of architectural ornamentation or in the overall construction materials and layout. Libraries and museums included spaces for reading rooms, meeting rooms, exhibit displays and smaller rooms for offices. Other spaces varied depending on the requirement of the facility, but included rooms for holdings, whether books or material collections.

Significance

In addition to the areas of significance under Criterion A noted in the general requirements, New Deal Educational resources may be eligible under Criterion A in the area of *education* or *entertainment/recreation*. They may further be eligible under Criterion C in the area of *architecture*. For education, some of these buildings served as the only school building in an area for many years and are therefore clearly associated with public education in these rural areas. Other education buildings were new, modern facilities that replaced inadequate, outdated, or dilapidated buildings. Some of these resources may have been additions to existing buildings which added facilities such as gymnasiums, auditoriums, libraries, industrial arts facilities, or art and music rooms.

Educational buildings may also be eligible under Criterion C because they feature distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or because they possess high artistic values. Some of these characteristics might include stylistic features that were popular during the period, such as Art Deco or Moderne features, or finely crafted materials and workmanship typically associated with the work relief programs such as the WPA, as seen in the local stonework often found in southeastern Colorado.

Registration Requirements

In addition to the registration requirements noted in the general section, an educational building eligible under Criterion C should retain its character-defining features that distinguish it as a spe-

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cific type, period, or method of construction. Character-defining features that identify it with a particular style, such as the Moderne style, or with a particular type, such as a one-room schoolhouse, should be retained. Examples of character-defining features include the form, mass, floor plan, organization of space, fenestration patterns, style, and materials. Integrity of workmanship is also critical for examples of New Deal work relief programs. For an educational building eligible solely under Criterion A, some alterations do not seriously lessen integrity, including replacement of windows (so long as the original number of openings and fenestrations remain), and additions to the rear if the primary facade and plan of the original building is clearly distinguishable from the addition. Integrity of location is important for education buildings, as this is related to original planning and establishment of the schools, unless the building was moved during its period of significance.

PROPERTY TYPE: *Social Welfare Buildings***Description**

This property type includes buildings and structures associated with state and local institutional facilities, as well as social welfare programs.

Subtype: *Hospitals and Clinics*

Franklin Roosevelt expressed a long-held interest in health facilities, for obvious personal reasons, and his administration supported the construction of hospitals and clinics across the nation. In order to benefit the greatest number of citizens, larger hospitals were built in communities that were centrally located to population. Few towns in eastern Colorado could meet this criterion. The tuberculosis clinic built by the WPA in Lamar, one of the larger plains towns in southeastern Colorado, was unable to attract a single patient; it was shortly converted to a junior college. The PWA funded a hospital addition in Greeley, but most of this program's hospital construction was confined to state hospital facilities located in front range communities.

Subtype: *Welfare Housing and Offices*

Few counties in eastern Colorado were set up to handle the welfare needs of its citizens during the Depression, when a huge percentage of the population found itself in need of assistance. The federal government, through numerous New Deal programs, handled the bulk of the relief and welfare cases. However, many counties initiated welfare committees or departments during this era and built projects either to provide relief through housing, or to accommodate the administration of county assistance programs. Few of these types of projects have been inventoried to date; additional research and survey work may yield additional information regarding the location of other projects of this type, as well as information about their character-defining features.

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One notable project is the Prowers County Welfare Housing complex in Lamar. Constructed through several phased WPA grants, this complex includes five stone buildings: four for housing and a central building containing laundry and bathrooms. One of the housing buildings also contained the offices for the newly formed commodities distribution department.

Subtype: *Work Camp Buildings and Structures*

Welfare housing was also provided at the CCC camps for the enrollees. Due to the nature of their work, the resources left behind by the Civilian Conservation Corps' soil conservation work in eastern Colorado will be difficult to locate and evaluate. The types of CCC resources in eastern plains that have a chance of being extant, as well as having the necessary documentation regarding location, design, and materials, are the actual CCC camps themselves. The camp buildings, which provided shelter, food, education, and medical care for the enrollees, are associated with improving the social welfare of the enrollees—unmarried men aged 18-25 (later extended to ages 17-28). As the first of Roosevelt's ambitious "back to work" programs, the initial camps were hastily developed. The men first lived in tents, later moving into wood-frame barracks. Each camp had four or five barrack buildings, one hundred feet long by twenty feet wide, with a mess hall, recreation hall, administration buildings, officers' quarters, a hospital, a garage, and often a schoolhouse. The buildings were usually arranged in a rough U-shape plan around an open space, which either was planted in grass or cleared for sports purposes. The first wood buildings of the earliest camps were quite solidly constructed, usually of cedar, and were not easily dismantled once the camps finished their projects. Sometimes the camps were turned over to a nearby community at the end of the project, but often they were simply boarded up.

The federal government soon realized this method of construction wasted time, effort and money given the typical short-term life of these camps. In 1936, the CCC standardized its camp planning and ended the practice of rigid or fixed-type of construction. All future CCC camps were to be of a pre-cut portable variety. The buildings had standardized designs and were easily dismantled at project's end, ready to be transported wherever a new camp was authorized. Not only did the program realize a substantial savings with this new construction, but also considerable ease in moving to new camp sites. Most of the SCS camps in eastern Colorado were likely of this design. After 1936, standard CCC camps had twenty-two buildings: four barracks buildings, one mess hall, one schoolhouse, a headquarters building, twelve officers' residences, recreational building, dispensary, truck garages, bath houses, one latrine block, and other service buildings.⁵ They rarely had foundations and were built of interchangeable prefabricated parts arranged in six-foot sections that were bolted together. The buildings could be arranged in a number of ways to give some variety, and enrollees labored to lay gravel paths, build rustic gates, and plant trees in order to improve the Spartan appearance of the camps. Large stone entry gates marked the

⁵Salmond, p. 136.; Fechner, pp. 5-6

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camp in Hugo. The men at the Springfield camp attempted to landscape their site. Given the extreme dry and dusty conditions of this camp, their efforts met with little success. The majority of the camp and its associated buildings or structures, however, were designed and planned from the outset to be eventually removed from the site.

Significance

In addition to the areas of significance under Criterion A noted in the general requirements, New Deal Social Welfare buildings may be eligible under Criterion A in the area of *health/medicine* or under Criterion C in the area of *architecture*. These buildings are significant for providing social welfare services that may have been the first modern medical facilities in the area or that provided much needed health, housing, and food to the transient or needy during the Great Depression. More significantly, many of these projects are significant in *social history* for establishing the federal precedent for the administration of human services, which previously had been left to private charity, relatives, or happenstance. Some Social Welfare buildings may also be eligible under Criterion C because they feature distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or because they possess high artistic values. Some of these include examples of buildings and structures built from standardized plans and are significant as the few surviving resources associated with a New Deal work camp program.

Registration Requirements

In addition to the registration requirements noted in the general section, a Social Welfare building eligible under Criterion C should retain its character-defining features which distinguish it as a specific type, period, or method of construction. Hospital or clinic buildings should retain those features that identify it with its use, such as the wide porches and numerous windows typically associated with a tuberculosis clinic.

It is unlikely that an entire work relief camp is extant in Colorado, as these were designed to be dismantled and the buildings moved after projects were completed. A moved camp building, though having lost integrity of location, may remain eligible depending on its significance. A relocated building significant under Criterion C for its individual architectural significance may remain eligible if it still has an orientation, setting, and general environment that are compatible to those of the historic location. However, if the architectural significance relates to the overall camp design, layout, and construction, a single relocated building cannot convey these relationships and will be ineligible. A relocated camp building significant for *social history* under Criterion A must retain sufficient integrity of feeling and association to convey that significance. Since camps were composed of a collection of special purpose buildings, any one building cannot convey the significance of an entire camp. If the significance is based on the social history associated with a single building, such as camp life in a CCC barracks, then the relocated building must retain sufficient integrity of design, materials workmanship, setting, feeling and asso-

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ciation to convey that significance. A moved building must retain the basic plan and design features typically associated with it. Replacement windows (so long as the original number of openings and size remain), minor additions, and new foundations do not seriously lessen integrity.

PROPERTY TYPE: *Public Utilities***Description**

Due to their community importance, New Deal-constructed public utilities were popular Colorado projects. On the eastern plains, these were constructed by either the WPA or the PWA. For those smaller communities that could not afford the match required by the PWA, the WPA program provided the funding and workers for a public utility project. Statewide, the WPA constructed or improved 78 utility plants, 279 miles of water mains or distribution pipes, and 224 miles of new storm and sanitary sewers.

The buildings that housed the water, electricity or sewage treatment plants typically were of simple construction and design due to their utilitarian nature. Stylistic treatment tended towards Art Deco or simple versions of the Moderne style, and construction materials were typically brick, concrete, or stone. Metal sash industrial windows were commonly used; depending upon the use of the building, there might be grouped or several extremely large windows or just a few small windows. Water mains and secondary lines and storm and sewer lines were not inventoried for this project due to the lack of information pertaining to original construction details and specific location, as well as the difficulty presented by field survey. Further research may provide additional information warranting their study. Finally, the PWA often funded complex mechanical equipment, such as the new boiler system for the Lamar Power & Light Company. These were located in the interior of the plant buildings and were also not included in the scope of this project.

Subtype: *Power/Heating Plants*

Power and heating plant buildings were designed to house the equipment necessary to provide electric power and/or steam heat for the nearby residents. The most significant part of these buildings, the interior mechanical equipment, was not included in the survey. Generally, though, the size of the building partly reflects the interior equipment and the function of the building. The PWA funded the construction of electric plants in Kit Carson (town), the electric district in La Salle and made improvements to the power systems in Lamar and Fort Morgan.

Subtype: *Storm Sewers and Sewage Treatment Facilities*

Colorado's healthy image in the early decades of the twentieth century was often at odds with reality. In 1930, most Colorado towns had no treatment system for sewage; untreated waste was

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flushed directly into rivers or, in rural areas, into farm ditches. Every major waterway in the state was polluted. In January 1936, the *Pueblo Chieftain* stated that Pueblo's twelve sewers polluted the Arkansas River so badly that, at best, it was ninety percent sewage between La Junta and the Kansas line, and closer to one hundred percent when the water was low. The deplorable conditions caused by untreated sewage naturally affected Coloradans' water supply. As a result of drinking contaminated water or eating locally-grown produce either grown or washed with this water, Colorado's death rate from typhoid was three times that of California; infants were twice as likely to die from diarrhea and enteritis.⁶

At a time when communities had no money to spend on public improvements, no matter the dire need, various New Deal agencies were consequently responsible for the construction of numerous storm sewers, sewer lines, and sewage treatment plants during the 1930s. Storm sewer construction included drainage lines, manholes, and catch basins. Sewage treatment facilities were typically housed in a single building in small rural towns, but may have included a complex of buildings in larger communities such as Pueblo. In addition to the plant buildings, sludge tanks, sewer lines, and connections through the community were built. The WPA constructed sewage disposal plants at Berthoud, Brush, Eaton, Hayden, Sterling, Sugar City, and Windsor and at Camp George West near Golden. The PWA funded the construction of sewage treatment or disposal plants in Eads, Greeley, and Pueblo, sanitary sewers for Cheyenne Wells, Eads, and Granada, and the installation of storm sewers for Sterling. In Brighton, the PWA and WPA cooperated to help that city construct its disposal system. Sewer lines also were constructed; the WPA carried out many of these projects and in small phased grants. As a result of the New Deal's influence in this field, by 1940, nearly 75 percent of Coloradans who used sewers treated their waste completely, and another 10 percent partially treated their waste.⁷

Subtypes: *Waterworks*

New Deal waterworks projects might include an entire system for a community, such as water treatment or filtration plants, pumping stations, water mains, and distribution lines, or storage facilities such as reservoirs or water towers and tanks. The latter projects were especially popular during the drought years in the Dust Bowl area of Colorado as communities were acutely aware how the lack of water affected the quality of life in small towns on the plains.

Both the WPA and PWA constructed water purification and distribution systems in numerous eastern Colorado communities, with larger projects generally funded by the PWA. PWA-funded projects included: waterworks systems for Boone, Cheyenne Wells, Dacono, Frederick, Grover,

⁶Leonard, pp. 102-103.

⁷Ibid.

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Julesburg, Kit Carson (town), La Junta, Ordway, Swink, and Yuma; a pump station in Manzanola; a well pump in Swink; a filter plant in Evans; a water tank in Hugo; water mains in Windsor and Yuma; and reservoirs in Fowler, Limon and Sterling. The WPA was typically involved in smaller waterworks projects, such as storage tanks or town wells, although several water mains and distribution lines were constructed as well. The Vona water storage tank shows the limitations of using unskilled WPA labor with its simple, poured concrete construction. The Walsh Water Storage tank was unusual, at least for a WPA project, in that it was a typical modern metal water tower which required welding skills. In this project, a skilled foreman was able to teach the laborers the necessary skills that resulted in a modern water system for Walsh. The CWA, a very short-lived New Deal construction program, had limited examples of waterworks. However, the Flagler Town Well #1 was planned as a simple, quick project that allowed it to be constructed in the few months that the CWA operated in the winter of 1933-34.

Subtype: *Sanitary Privies*

Many residents of the sparsely populated eastern plains relied on privies for their sewage disposal. The WPA constructed more than 2.3 million sanitary privies nationwide, with almost 32,000 of those in Colorado. These projects were generally undertaken by the state Department of Health in a multi-county region. Although WPA records did not offer specific locations of each privy, it appears that virtually every county had a sanitation project. The WPA developed a standardized privy design of wood frame construction with a shed roof. They were mass-produced by a WPA employee in a central location for distribution in the multi-county region. The privies were delivered to the site by WPA workers and set on a base constructed by the WPA work crews. Bases were usually concrete, although an example of a wood-framed pit has been noted in the town of Sedgwick.

Significance

In addition to the areas of significance under Criterion A noted in the general requirements, New Deal Public Utility resources may be eligible under Criterion A in the areas of *health/medicine* or *community planning and development*. For recently settled communities in eastern Colorado, sanitation facilities, waterworks and power plants were frequently lacking or sub-standard. The New Deal represented the only chance that many of these towns had to construct modern, or even their first, public utilities. Under Criterion C, the resource may be eligible in *engineering* if it embodies distinctive characteristics of the type, period, or method of construction. Some may represent progressive construction methods, as the PWA in particular was noted for its innovation in this area of construction.

Registration Requirements

It is typical for public utilities to be updated regularly, as required by changing needs or technology. It is therefore likely that many of these resources were altered, abandoned and/or demol-

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ished to make way for new technology. Additional data is needed in order to determine the typical types of alterations, the likely dates of changes, and the number of extant intact or unaltered examples of this property type. In addition to the registration requirements noted in the general section, a public utility eligible under Criterion C should retain its character-defining features which distinguish it as a specific type, period, or method of construction. Under Criterion A, however, additions to treatment plants would be allowed if the primary facade and plan of the original building were clearly distinguishable from the addition. Due to the difficulty of surveying below-ground utility distribution lines, individual components of a public utility can be considered eligible on their own, such as a water tower. The individual resource may be eligible if it is a significant example of a style or engineering construction method or for its association in social history as an example of a New Deal project which brought much-needed work to the unemployed of eastern Colorado. The skills learned on-the-job in these WPA projects may have further aided the workers as they eventually left the agency for employment in either the public or private sectors.

PROPERTY TYPE: *Recreational and Cultural Resources***Description**

Franklin Roosevelt was a staunch believer in the health benefits provided by outdoor activities and recreation. Furthermore, in the difficult times of the Depression, recreational and cultural activities were recognized for their psychological benefits as well. "Because of the parks and playgrounds built by WPA, millions of people who can't afford to belong to country clubs can now swim and play golf, tennis and other healthful outdoor games."⁸ Finally, many of the types of resources in this category were simple to construct and therefore well suited to the majority of workers on relief. "Eighty per cent of the distressed people whom WPA must employ are unskilled, yet suited to the building of recreational and sport facilities. That is why a large part of WPA's effort now goes to building and improving parks and playgrounds, swimming pools, gymnasiums and amphitheatres."⁹ The WPA was involved with many recreational projects in Colorado, having built or improved 119 parks, 195 playground and athletic fields, and 32 swimming or wading pools across the state.¹⁰

⁸*The WPA Worker*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (August 1936), p. 12.

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰*Final Report on the WPA Program*, pp. 126-127, 135-136.

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Some of the largest examples of New Deal resources on the eastern plains are the prominent combination auditorium/gymnasium/community center buildings. Several of these projects were sponsored by a local school district. They were built on school property, generally adjacent to an existing school and sometimes included classrooms or other educational space. However, many of these projects note in their New Deal grant application that the buildings were planned from the outset as community centers and gathering places for the surrounding area. Very few of the towns or school districts in eastern Colorado had such facilities prior to the 1930s, and the construction of these buildings met several community needs.

As community centers that would serve multiple purposes, care was taken in the planning and design of such buildings that went beyond a building that would have been used only by a school district. As noted in the PWA publication *Public Buildings: Architecture Under the Public Works Administrations 1933-1939*:

One of the units in the school building that is essential is the gymnasium The auditorium is one of the most important units in the school building and yet it is usually the most poorly planned. The reason is that until lately there has been considerable confusion as to how the auditorium should be used. Originally it was merely an assembly hall where the whole school met in the morning for opening exercises. In recent years, however, it has come to be recognized that the school should be the community center of the neighborhood and that the auditorium should be constructed for use both by the school and by the community as a school theater in which plays, concerts, lectures, and motion pictures may be presented. Unfortunately, the use of the auditorium as a school and community theater is of such recent growth that school officials and architects are only just beginning to realize that the modern school auditorium must be planned on altogether different lines from the old assembly hall.¹¹

Although PWA-funded projects, by nature of the program, were architect-designed, WPA projects did not require professionally prepared plans. Even so, it was clear that planning for such large buildings required more expertise than was typically available in the small rural communities in eastern Colorado. Therefore many WPA gymnasiums/community centers relied on the skills of the district WPA engineer or architect. Consequently, there are often similarities of design in these buildings located within a specific WPA district.

¹¹Short, p. xxii.

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The PWA funded construction of auditorium/gymnasiums in Akron, Platteville, and Morgan County, as well as a gymnasium in Haxtun. The WPA built community centers in Seibert, Burlington, Frederick, Hartman, Hoehne, Hugo, Stratton, and Two Buttes. These multi-purpose buildings included classrooms, but clearly served as community centers as well. The Two Buttes center even had a room set aside for the local Masonic chapter in the basement. Fort Wooten in Las Animas County was an unusual example of a war memorial built by the WPA. It was patterned after historic Bent's Fort and served not only as a war memorial, but as a meeting place for veterans' organizations.

Buildings in this sub-type typically featured large open spaces for either recreation or ceremonial purposes. Hardwood floors were used in the gymnasium areas, and there was usually a stage at one end of the gym. Restrooms, showers, and dressing rooms were often in the basement. Other small rooms were at either ends of the building or located on the sides. Roofs were typically barrel vaulted, although some flat roof examples are found. East central and northeast Colorado buildings were typically reinforced concrete, or adobe covered with concrete stucco, and reflected the influence of Art Deco or Moderne styles. Windows were grouped in tall, narrow openings with vertical motifs or panels separating them. Southeast Colorado buildings were typically of locally quarried native stone and reflected the influence of the Rustic style or local vernacular building traditions.

Subtype: *Swimming Pools and Bathhouses*

Swimming pools and bathhouses were popular projects in the dusty and parched communities of eastern Colorado. One town noted in the justification section of its WPA application that the nearest water was forty miles away! The pools constructed by the WPA were in-ground reinforced concrete. Larger pools were surrounded by concrete decking, and some included a diving area with diving board. Bathhouses built in conjunction with the pools generally had a central portion for administrative offices and public space with sections on either side containing dressing rooms for men and women. The end sections did not have windows, and most bathhouses had flat roofs. The concrete bathhouse in Hugo is a sleek Moderne example with rounded corners and horizontal bands of windows. In eastern Colorado, the WPA constructed pools in Akron, Burlington, Cheyenne Wells, Deer Trail, Haxtun, Holyoke, and Fort Morgan. Smaller wading pools were built in several parks as well, including the city parks in Springfield and La Junta.

Most of the WPA swimming and wading pools were of the drain and fill type without heating or filtration systems. The State Health Department began requiring heating and filtration systems in the 1950s. Many WPA pools closed at that time. Few small wading pools appear to have survived.

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Colorado's Eastern Plains**Subtype: *Sports and Recreation Resources***

This sub-type includes stadiums, grandstands, and athletic fields. These varied greatly in size, depending upon the size and means of the community that sponsored the project. Sports fields included football fields, tracks, baseball diamonds, and tennis courts, the latter generally with a hard surface. Some of these fields were fenced. Stadiums and grandstands included bleachers for seating, the majority uncovered. As most of the projects were small, the WPA was the primary New Deal relief agency involved with their construction. The WPA built tennis courts in Ault and Lamar, athletic fields in Sedgwick, and a stone grandstand with track and field in Lamar. This latter project was unusual in that not only was it large in scope, but it was one of the last WPA construction projects funded in southeast Colorado.

Subtype: *Parks*

Unlike the Front Range or mountainous counties in Colorado, where public land in several hundred to thousand acre parcels was owned by either federal, state, or local agencies, recreation land in eastern Colorado was not as readily accessible or available. Therefore this sub-type is not found as frequently as it is in other parts of the state. Parks here ranged in size from small parcels encompassing a single city block, generally 300 x 300 feet, to several acres, such as Willow Creek Park in Lamar. Nonetheless, recreation was still seen as an important amenity for these eastern Colorado communities. New Deal relief programs constructed the first public recreation sites in some towns. In addition to developing entire parks, improvements to existing parks were also included in many projects, such as picnic shelters, restroom facilities, landscaping, recreation and accessory buildings, and pathways and bridges. Constructed at a time when the National Park Service and Forest Service were both promoting "rustic" architecture in natural settings, the larger parks in particular emphasized native materials and naturalistic landscaping. Smaller city block parks tended to be less formally planned, and many of these have been altered over the years with the addition of new recreation facilities. The WPA developed small parks in Ovid, Stratton and Vona, and made improvements to other existing parks such as the one in Springfield. Willow Creek Park in Lamar began as a CWA flood control project, but grew into a multi-phased WPA project that included landscaping and construction of several rustic stone buildings, bridges, and curbs laid out in a naturalistic-designed park.

Subtype: *Fairgrounds*

Buildings and structures associated with this sub-type include grandstands or bleachers, barns, show rings, rodeo arenas, racetracks, exhibit halls, stock pens, and storage sheds. Landscaping features or utilities may have also been included in the relief construction projects. No extant resources were found in the four target counties. The large Baca County Fairgrounds project, approved by the WPA in 1941, was days away from construction when a county commissioner halted the project. He expressed unhappiness about the distribution of projects across the county. Until more projects were approved for eastern Baca County, he did not want the fairgrounds pro-

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ject to move forward, which benefited the central part of the county. In Prowers County, the Lamar stock display arena and stands were built, but due to their less durable adobe construction, are no longer extant. Further survey and research will be necessary to determine the types of buildings and their character-defining features.

Significance

In addition to the areas of significance under Criterion A noted in the general requirements, Recreational and Cultural Resources may be eligible under Criterion A in the areas of *entertainment/recreation*, *community planning and development*, or Criterion C in the area of *architecture* or *landscape architecture*. These New Deal projects were often the sole focus for recreational activities in eastern plains communities, and in many instances were also the first developed facilities of their type. Under Criterion C, they may be significant as outstanding examples of a type, style, or method of construction. Native building materials built in a "rustic" manner represented eastern Colorado's response to the growing Rustic architecture movement championed by the National Park Service and the US Forest Service. Larger parks may be significant in their use of landscape architecture principles which were combined with the soil conservation methods required in the Dust Bowl areas of eastern Colorado.

Registration Requirements

Recreational and Cultural Resources may be significant under Criterion A in the area of *entertainment/recreation* or *community planning and development* if they represent a significant contribution to the community by providing either the first or a new and modern recreational facility. They may also be eligible under Criterion C if they possess distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction, or if they possess high artistic values. Examples include buildings or structures constructed with finely crafted local materials, or which employed a distinctive construction method often associated with New Deal work relief program. Character-defining features will likely involve design, materials and setting. For buildings, the layout should still reflect the intent of the original use, even if the present use has changed. For landscapes, the original arrangement of use areas, roads, and large planting areas should be intact. Parks may contain newer buildings, but their number and size should not have overwhelmed the original design or changed use areas. Small city parks are the most likely to have changed over the years, as the construction of new facilities cannot help but impact the overall design and sense of feeling. Some smaller parks may contain individual resources within their boundaries which may be eligible for the National Register, such as stone restrooms or entry gates. Swimming pools are the most likely to have been demolished, and the few remaining pools are likely eligible even with some moderate loss of integrity.

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Colorado's Eastern Plains**PROPERTY TYPE: *Conservation Resources*****Description**

The New Deal was initiated at a time when there was increased interest, or in the case of soil conservation, increased concern about Colorado's natural resources. Natural resource conservation work was therefore another category of New Deal relief work that affected the cultural landscape of eastern Colorado. Various New Deal conservation projects were conducted by the CCC or the WPA. Although the CCC was often referred to as "Roosevelt's Tree Army" and was therefore typically associated with the Forest Service or National Park Service, in eastern Colorado the camps were assigned to the Soil Conservation Service. This agency was conceived because of the devastation wrought by the Dust Bowl, which is often referred to as the nation's worst ecological disaster. This led Roosevelt to note that "A nation that destroys its soils destroys itself." Certainly, the economy of eastern Colorado would have eventually collapsed if soil conservation methods were not put into place.

While many of the CCC projects directed by the Forest Service and the National Parks and Monuments Service in Colorado are well recognized today, the CCC camps assigned to the eastern plains left behind less tangible and visible physical resources. Beginning in 1935 working with the Soil Conservation Service, the CCC boys in eastern Colorado initiated demonstration farms utilizing soil conservation and wind control techniques. By 1940, the CCC began to use its manpower for actual soil conservation projects: constructing terraces, furrows, gully outlets, check dams, and fences, reseeding pasture areas and planting trees. At a time when the SCS initiated the concept of soil conservation districts, the CCC boys were important factors in making farming in eastern Colorado more sustainable. Their conservation work was invaluable in developing a more sustainable agricultural economic base for eastern Colorado. In many instances in eastern Colorado, the CCC was aided in its soil conservation work by the WPA. The WPA also constructed projects such as small dams, fish hatcheries, and reservoirs when planned by the local government. Descriptive information and specific historic data for these important projects were not available for many of the conservation resources that were built by New Deal agencies. Therefore, further research and survey is needed to first determine the location of these resources, and next to identify the character-defining features for a majority of these conservation-related resources. A basic outline of conservation sub-types is included below in anticipation of such survey.

Subtype: *Soil Conservation Resources*

The majority of New Deal conservation efforts in eastern Colorado focused on reducing or eliminating wind and water erosion of the soil. Under the direction of the Soil Conservation Service, eight semi-permanent CCC companies were assigned to eastern Colorado. These camps constructed earth dams (check and impounding), diversion ditches, terraces, contour furrows,

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and fences, as well as revegetating rangeland and planting grass seeds and trees. They also demonstrated strip cropping and rough tillage. Additional research is needed to define the characteristic-defining features of New Deal soil conservation practices as well as the location of the CCC and WPA work.

Shelterbelts were large stands of trees strategically placed to reduce wind erosion on farm land. They were planted in eastern Colorado by the CCC and WPA. Several species of trees and shrubs were planted. Some trees may still remain, but due to the nature of living species, they may have also been altered over time. Further research is needed to determine the location of the shelterbelts as well as any nurseries that may have supplied the trees, in addition to the species planted and typical dimensions of the shelterbelts.

Subtype: *Water Conservation Resources*

The typical semi-arid conditions of the eastern plains were exacerbated during the extreme and prolonged drought of the 1930s. Consequently, numerous water conservation projects were planned and built by New Deal programs. Dams, reservoirs, irrigation projects, and correcting waterways are examples of the types of construction projects that dealt with water conservation. Dams were typically earth core on various bases. Larger dams included riprap from the base to the crest on the front sections. Smaller stock dams were typically earth fill with core trench, and followed the natural contours of the land in order to make the best use of run-off. Spillways, if constructed, were masonry or reinforced concrete. Some projects attempted to correct flooding problems by altering the natural channels of waterways. Finally, irrigation projects for the agricultural drought-stricken counties of eastern Colorado were also built.

Subtype: *Fish Hatcheries and Wildlife Refuges*

Further research is needed to better define the specific types of resources that may be included in this sub-type, as well as their character-defining features. However, WPA and sometimes CCC camps were known to work on the development or improvement of wildlife refuges, as well as the construction of fish hatcheries. Typical work included construction of trails, fences, ponds, and accessory buildings, and developing wildlife cover and food areas.

Significance

In addition to the areas of significance under Criterion A noted in the general requirements, Conservation Resources may be eligible under Criterion A in the areas of *conservation* or *invention*. The New Deal soil conservation construction projects coincided with the inception of the Soil Conservation Service and the development of soil conservation districts. New techniques in agriculture were being tested which represented significant innovations in the field of soil conservation. The state's first efforts to manage its soil resources through newly designed conservation farming practices occurred during this period.

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Colorado's Eastern Plains**Registration Requirements**

Additional research is needed to further determine other areas of significance and registration requirements based on integrity. However, due to the difficulty in determining the location of many of the early soil conservation construction projects, any extant resources are likely to be extremely significant for their ability to reveal the science and construction methods of the earliest erosion prevention. They are likely to be significant under Criterion A in the area of *conservation* as representative of some of the earliest soil conservation work in Colorado, and under Criterion C as possessing distinctive characteristics of a type and period of conservation work. Character-defining features are likely to involve design, materials and setting. Resources built in large numbers, such as check dams and shelterbelts, may require further study in order to place them in a larger context of a cultural landscape or even within an area containing a soil conservation district.

PROPERTY TYPE: *Transportation Resources***Description**

Transportation-related resources represent the single largest category of New Deal relief construction expenditures. In eastern Colorado, the WPA in particular awarded a majority of its funds for graveling and grading farm-to-market roads. In small towns, a number of projects also oiled or paved streets, or constructed sidewalks and curbs. Due to lack of specific construction details or geographic information, these types of resources were not included within the scope of this project. Future research may reveal additional information, however, which would allow survey and evaluation of these types of resources. Bridges presently represent the major subtype of inventoried transportation resources.

Subtype: *Highways, Roads and Streets*

The WPA constructed or improved of 9,458 miles of highways, roads, and streets throughout Colorado. Combined with the construction or improvement of bridges, viaducts, and culverts, this category amounted to 34.8 percent of Colorado's WPA construction funds.

Subtype: *Bridges*

Bridges were constructed through the sponsorship of many government agencies, generally either the state or county, but sometimes a local community. Statewide, WPA workers built or improved 3,368 bridges and viaducts and 21,241 culverts. State highway bridges constructed during this period were sometimes built of reinforced concrete, a material more labor intensive than steel. County highway bridges, especially in southeastern Colorado, were often stone arches, which represented a relatively archaic method of construction that involved extensive

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man power. The stone used for bridge construction was generally quarried locally, which provided additional work for unemployed residents. Some bridges in small towns were timber construction; again, requiring more labor and less material cost than steel construction.

The stone bridges of southeastern Colorado represent an especially noteworthy collection of WPA craftsmanship. The stone was generally quarry-faced, and the masonry work varied from random to coursed ashlar. A few bridges featured dressed-faced stones, but generally the finer stonework was relegated to the voussoirs or the keystones of the arches. Many of the bridge parapets were finished with a concrete coping. Numerous inscriptions, either noting the date, foreman or workers' names or initials, project number, or simply "WPA," can still be found on these bridges. Sometimes a large WPA project constructed multiple bridges or culverts. An increasing level of craftsmanship can be observed in these instances, where the workers clearly gained masonry skills as they continued in the project. Examples of this sub-type range in size from very small culverts with less than a three foot opening to five-span bridges built on high piers. They share common associative characteristics, however, of local materials built with unskilled relief workers.

Subtype: *Airport Facilities*

Further research is needed to better define the specific types of resources that may be included in this sub-type, as well as their character-defining features, as no airport facilities were found in the intensive survey of the four target counties. However, various New Deal relief programs, including FERA, CWA, and the WPA were known to have worked on the development, enlargement, or improvement of airports throughout the country. Although it was a relatively fledgling mode of transportation during this period, it was clearly critical to the state's future. Twelve new or improved landing fields were built in Colorado by the WPA, and seven were reconstructed or improved; 179,565 new and 24,680 repaired linear feet of runways were completed; thirty-one airport buildings were built or added to, and an additional 116 were repaired.¹²

Significance

In addition to the areas of significance under Criterion A noted in the general requirements, Transportation Resources may be eligible under Criterion A in the area of *transportation* or *community planning and development*. These resources were critical to improving conditions for farmers and ranchers in transporting their agricultural goods to markets, and were constructed in response to the growing use of automobiles and airplanes as well. They may also be eligible under Criterion C in *engineering* or *architecture* as outstanding examples of a type, style, or method of construction. Bridges and culverts may be significant for their design, type of con-

¹²Final Report on the WPA Program, pp. 126-127, 135-136.

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struction, or use of native building materials. They are also significant as examples of work relief projects designed to put as many unemployed back to work as possible, thereby using archaic construction methods and unskilled labor. Projects both large and small illustrate this significance; size and complexity alone should not be indications of significance. Also, the quality of masonry work is not a determinant of eligibility. In fact, beginning masonry skills would be expected on the earliest (or at the start of) WPA projects. Certified masons were considered "skilled labor," and the WPA program was designed to minimize the numbers of these workers and instead hire greater numbers of unskilled laborers. While skills might grow during the length of an assignment, a progression of masonry techniques better reflects the program's intent. In the cases where there are multiple resources that demonstrate growing skills, the resources may be eligible as part of a district when it can be documented that they were constructed as part of a single WPA project. An entire group of bridges and culverts located along a single stretch of road, for example, may serve as excellent examples of the changing skills of the workers from the initiation of a project to the end.

Registration Requirements

Transportation Resources may be significant under Criterion A in the area of *transportation* if they represent a significant contribution to the community by changing or improving the transportation patterns of the area. Character-defining features in these instances include location, setting, and feeling. The method of construction and design should be evident, but in the case of county bridges, some deterioration or alterations may be allowable, including paint, installation of guard rails on the interior (roadside) of the parapets, loss of one wingwall, or deterioration due to vehicular damage of a few courses of stone or end posts. Removal of the top courses or parapets, installation of guard rails on top of the parapets, loss of two or more wingwalls, infilling the spans with metal pipes, or removal of the stone arches constitutes a major loss of design, materials and workmanship rendering the bridge ineligible. Under Criterion C, the resources should retain the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction, or they may possess high artistic values. Buildings or structures constructed with finely crafted local materials or which employed a distinctive construction method often associated with New Deal work relief program would be eligible in these instances. For a district that includes a road, original pavement is not necessarily a requirement because street and highway pavements are inherently fragile components that are routinely covered over and replaced. However, it is likely that paved highways have also been changed in width; therefore, gravel/dirt county roads are most likely to retain a higher degree of integrity that would be required in order to be considered contributing elements of a linear district. All of these requirements are in addition to those noted in the general requirements for significance in *social history*.

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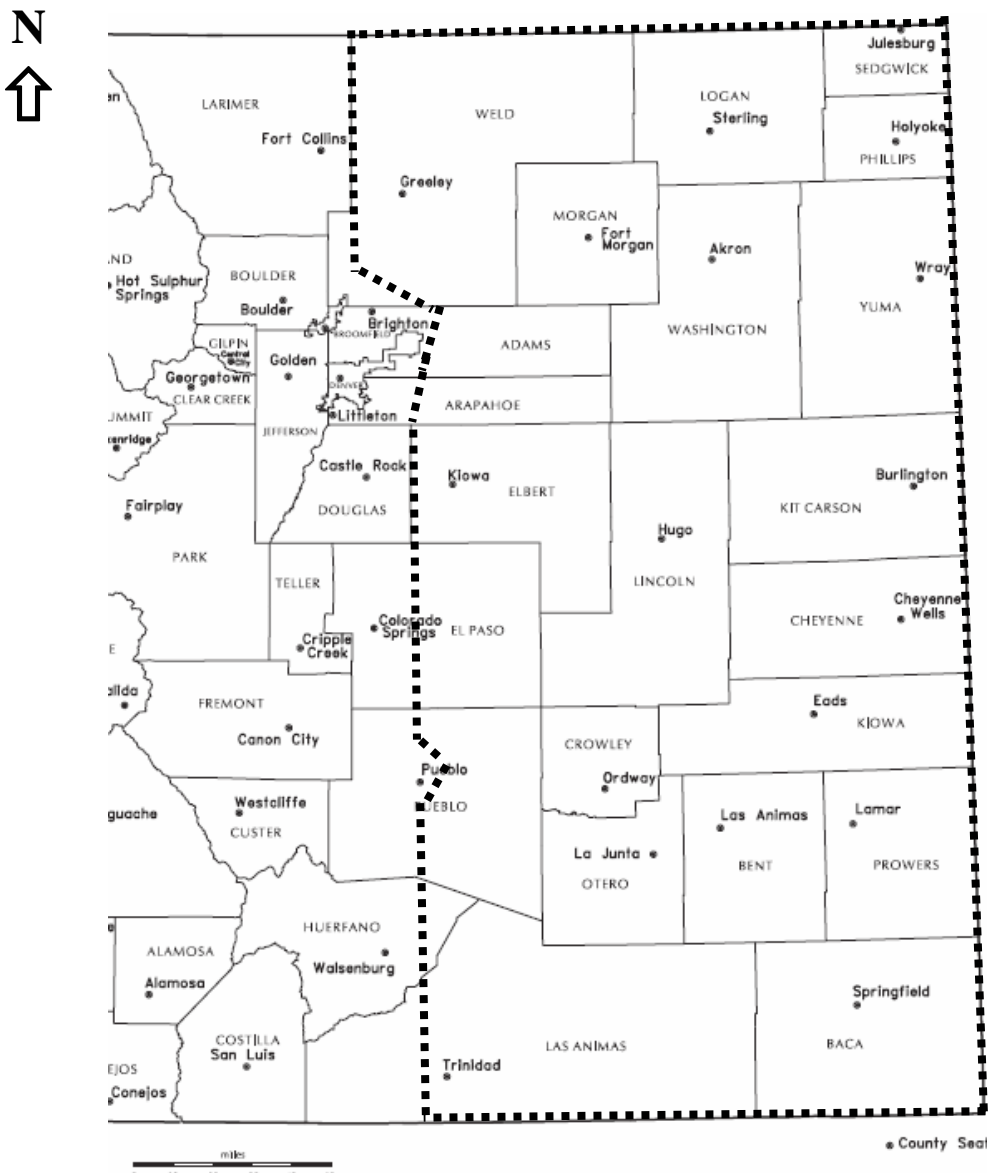
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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

The geographic area encompasses the following counties in eastern Colorado east of the Front Range urban corridor: Adams (eastern portion), Arapahoe (eastern portion), Baca, Bent, Cheyenne, Crowley, El Paso (eastern portion), Elbert, Huerfano (eastern portion), Kiowa, Kit Carson, Las Animas (eastern portion), Lincoln, Logan, Morgan, Otero, Phillips, Prowers, Pueblo (eastern portion), Sedgwick, Washington, Weld (eastern portion), and Yuma. The following map indicates the general geographic area of applicability. The western boundary reflects the approximate border between New Deal projects related to eastern plain's urban and rural projects as opposed to those for Front Range urban, Rocky Mountain, and Western Slope projects.



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Colorado's Eastern Plains**SUMMARY OF IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION METHODS**

The Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) for "New Deal Resources on Colorado's Eastern Plains" was developed to provide a broad context for evaluating the extant built resources constructed as part of federal work relief programs during the Depression for public works and conservation. The decision to limit the geographic area to the eastern portion of the state was based on several factors. First, there is already extensive documentation of New Deal resources for a number of the federally owned lands in the Rocky Mountain area of the state, as well as for the larger Front Range communities such as Denver, Boulder, and Pueblo. Furthermore, the counties in eastern Colorado were located in the nation's Dust Bowl during the 1930s and share common historical associative attributes. The plains counties of Colorado are also generally under-represented in the state's database of inventoried and designated properties. Finally, this era was the most intensive historic period of public works construction in eastern Colorado.

The project began with gathering background information about New Deal projects in Colorado. This information, used to develop the historic contexts and prepare for field survey work, was based on a thorough study of both primary and secondary sources. These sources include previous surveys and nominations, city and county histories (both published and unpublished), historic newspapers, city and county government records, Sanborn maps, historic photographs, federal and state government reports and publications, and publications covering general New Deal or Colorado history during the Great Depression. These sources were found at local libraries, local county museums or historical societies, local governments, the Colorado State Archives, the Stephen Hart Library of the Colorado Historical Society, the Western History and Genealogical Division of the Denver Public Library, and the National Archives and Records Administration branches in both Denver and College Park, Maryland. Furthermore, interlibrary loan services were utilized to obtain documents from various Colorado research libraries as well as from libraries throughout the country. This background research revealed that there are no local or state sources which have a comprehensive list of projects that were constructed by New Deal programs in Colorado.

Research at the Colorado State Archives is hampered by its filing system. There are no card catalogues; only shelves of three-ring notebooks containing files listings on various topics. These are generally arranged by current state departments and divisions. For state agencies from the New Deal era which no longer exist, the archives staff was unable to determine the location of the files, or if they even existed. Therefore, there was an overall lack of both comprehensive and specific project information available through the State Archives. There are, however, numerous boxes relating to the Civilian Conservation Corps, the majority of which contain files pertaining to personnel information. There are some photographs of camps, which give an idea of camp layout and construction, as well as camp newsletters and histories. There is only limited information about the soil conservation projects though, primarily a summation of completed statis-

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tics (miles of contour terraces, number of check dams, rods of fencing, etc.). Information regarding other New Deal programs, such as the PWA, WPA, FERA, and CWA, was not found at the State Archives. Although these were federal programs, most had some level of operations or coordination through state agencies. The lack of information is both disappointing and puzzling in light of the excellent comprehensive history of Colorado during the Depression by James Wickens, which frequently references files from the State Archives. Unfortunately, requests for those specific documents were usually futile.¹³

The Stephen Hart Library at the Colorado Historical Society has general information about the New Deal in Colorado, including a summary list through 1941 of WPA project totals by construction categories. Again, specific project information or a comprehensive list of New Deal projects is not available. However, there is a limited collection of WPA photographs mounted on cards for some projects, as well as copies of several of the state WPA newsletter, the *WPA Worker*. This newsletter contains several photographs of selected projects either completed or during construction, usually accompanied by brief information about the projects. Copies of the *WPA Worker* are also available at other Colorado research libraries. The Hart library has an extensive collection of historical newspapers from around the state on microfilm. The Colorado Historical Society also houses the files of the SHPO's office, which contains copies of previously surveyed or designated New Deal resources.

The Western History and Genealogy division of the Denver Public Library has a number of general New Deal publications, both at the national and state level, including copies of Wickens' original thesis upon which his book is based. There is a clipping file of New Deal articles from the *Denver Post* and *Rocky Mountain News*, which contain summary lists of projects throughout the state; some of these articles list specific projects by county. There are also several WPA photograph notebooks, containing images of WPA projects mounted on cards with limited project information. Finally, there are some WPA folders which primarily contain information on service projects.

The National Archives and Record Administration (NARA) branch in Denver has records on the CCC (only the grazing division), but no other federal New Deal programs. The College Park, Maryland branch of NARA is the primary repository for all New Deal records (besides the CCC) in the country. It houses project application files for the CWA and WPA, indexes for PWA projects, and administrative records and reports for the WPA. Due to an illegal disposal of records in the 1940s, only approximately one-third of the PWA project files remain at NARA. Furthermore, no plans, specifications, or drawing files that originally accompanied WPA project folders

¹³James Wickens, *Colorado in the Great Depression* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1979). This is one of the best histories of the New Deal era for any western state. It provided a significant amount of background information for the historic contexts.

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remain. There is a still photograph collection at this facility, however, with photographs of numerous Colorado WPA projects as well as some PWA projects. Based on the large number of projects and the plans for additional New Deal survey to continue on the eastern plains, copies of the microfilm reels containing the indexes to all CWA and WPA projects in Colorado, as well as the project application files for these projects, were purchased. Upon completion of the project, these will be made available for future researchers at the Stephen Hart Library, Colorado Historical Society in Denver, Colorado.

After preliminary background research, a field survey was conducted in four target counties in eastern Colorado – two in the southeastern corner of the state, one in east-central Colorado, and one in the northeastern section. Although lack of locational information and final “as-built” construction appearance hampered some of the field survey and evaluation, all known extant resources within the four target counties area were evaluated for their potential eligibility for listing in the National Register. Background information on the individual resources was found through the NARA research, historical newspapers, and information at local museums. There was a local historical society/museum in three of the four target survey counties: the Fort Sedgwick Museum–Archives (Sedgwick County), the Big Timbers Museum (Prowers County), and the Baca County Museum. Press releases were sent to all local newspapers asking local residents to contact the project coordinator with information about any New Deal projects, but there were no responses. A few individuals were interviewed through local contacts, however.

Additional information on a few of the individual buildings within the study area was contained in previously compiled inventory forms and nominations for individual properties which have already been listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the Colorado State Register of Historic Properties. Some of these nominations are dated, though, and have either focused on the architecture of the building or another area of significance without attempting to place the resource in a larger historical context of the New Deal era. Therefore, additional research using primary and secondary data sources was undertaken specifically for this project, both to add to the existing database for each building and to complete the history for the few buildings surveyed.

Based on the background information gathered through both archival and field research, historic contexts were developed which represent the major construction programs of the New Deal in eastern Colorado. This represents the thematic-based approach for developing historic contexts. They were based on the economic, social, and political forces that shaped the built environment on Colorado's eastern plains during the Great Depression through federal relief work programs. These programs resulted in the construction of numerous public works and are expressed by the extant resources in the region.

Property types were based on categories of resources sharing similar original functions. This system of classification is similar to that used by the New Deal federal agencies at the time of the

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resource's construction. Integrity requirements for the property types were based on knowledge of the existing conditions of extant properties in four counties targeted during the first phase of survey in eastern Colorado—Baca, Kit Carson, Prowers, and Sedgwick—and an evaluation of these properties to determine the extent of alterations made after the period of significance. As the first phase of survey was limited to four counties, for some property types there were only a few examples upon which this MPDF was based. These include: health clinics, civic buildings, public utilities (waterworks and electric plants), social welfare housing and parks. As more examples of these property types are surveyed in the future, additional information may be revealed, either regarding the relative scarcity of some property types or the registration requirements. Other property types had several examples, such as schools, gymnasiums/auditoriums, and bridges. Nonetheless, additional survey in the future may uncover information warranting amendments to this document.

The first phase of survey did not include certain property types known to have been constructed as part of New Deal federal work relief efforts in Colorado. Some of these resources are probably extant in other eastern Colorado counties, but were either never built or are no longer extant in the four target survey counties. Future survey will likely warrant an amendment to this MPDF in order to add additional property types. Some resources were excluded from consideration in the survey project. The decision to exclude these was arrived with input from the SHPO staff and the project's advisory committee, and was based primarily on the general lack of documentation regarding either the resource's location or details of original construction. Lack of locational information is an obvious deterrent to field survey, but the lack of data regarding original construction is just as critical. For contour terracing or check dams, for example, lack of information regarding the project's size, shape, height, and construction materials would make it impossible to evaluate the historic integrity of the resource. Furthermore, the likelihood of alterations to many of these resources was high. Still, data may be uncovered in the future which would warrant these resources' evaluation and their inclusion in future amendments. These resources include: soil conservation and wind erosion techniques such as shelterbelts, terraces, dams, as well as roads.

A grant from the State Historical Fund of Colorado through the Colorado Historical Society partially funded the survey of New Deal resources and the MPDF preparation. Deon Wolfenbarger, survey coordinator for Colorado Preservation, Inc., conducted the field survey work and authored the MPDF. James Stratis, preservation projects manager, provided project oversight for the State Historical Fund. Dale Heckendorn, National and State Register Coordinator, reviewed project deliverables. An oversight committee provided guidance and review comments regarding the survey and documentation for the MPDF. The committee consisted of Mark Rodman, executive director of Colorado Preservation, Inc., William Arbogast, Terry Blevins, Judith Rice Jones, and Jill Seyfarth. All the project personnel met federal professional qualifications in 36 CFR-61, with the areas of archeology, architectural history, landscape architecture, history, and historic preservation represented.

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The following properties previously listed in the National Register meet the registration requirements as set forth in the multiple property documentation form:

Civic and Government Buildings	NRIS Number
Municipal Buildings	
Holly City Hall.....	03001010
119 E. Cheyenne St., Holly, Prowers County	
Courthouses	
Morgan County Courthouse and Jail	02000289
225 Ensign and 218 W. Kiowa, Fort Morgan	
Morgan County	
Post Offices	
Lamar Post Office	86000179
300 S. Fifth St., Lamar, Prowers County	
Educational Buildings	
Primary and Secondary School Facilities	
Wiley Rock Schoolhouse	04000057
603 Main St., Wiley, Prowers County	
Libraries and Museums	
Fort Vasquez Site	70000169
US Highway 85, Platteville vicinity, Weld County	
Transportation Resources	
Bridges	
Douglas Crossing Bridge	85000224
County Rd. 28, Granada vicinity, Prowers County	