

Literature, Culture and Society in Depression Era America: Archives of the Federal Writers' Project

A key to understanding literature, culture and society in America during the Depression.

Date Range: 1933-1943

Content: 37,407 pages

Source Library: Library of Congress

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DETAIL: The American Guide Project Works Progress Administration, N.d. 48pp.
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DETAIL: The Journal Of The Illinois State Historical Society, N.d. 23pp.
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The Federal Writers' Project (FWP) was part of Federal One, the arts project established by the Works Progress Administration (WPA). The WPA recognized that steelworkers, sharecroppers and factory workers were not the only section of the American economy hit by the Depression. Academics, novelists and playwrights were also struggling. In five years, the WPA spent millions to provide literary training and, more significantly, the opportunity for participants to observe, eat and write.

This collection presents the FWP publications of all 47 states involved in the 10-year project. Forming the most complete collection of publications from all participating states, this archive contains more than 450 individual items, many of which are typed or mimeographed and received only limited circulation in their time. The style of writing, the designs, the typography and the contents all add up to a remarkable picture of this depressed and yet creative period of American history.

Literature, Culture and Society in Depression Era America: Archives of the Federal Writers' Project provides a lively and detailed view of America during the Great Depression. Students of social history will find almost every aspect of life covered, from industry and labor relations, through welfare and government, to sports and hobbies.

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This collection includes important City Guides. A few examples:

- Aberdeen: A middle border city, Cincinnati
- Louisville: A guide to the falls city
- San Diego: A California city

Publications that sprang out of FWP social-ethnic studies include:

- The Armenians in Massachusetts
- The Italians of New York
- Cavalcade of the American Negro

Industrial and labor issues are addressed in publications such as:

- Annals of Labor and Industry in Illinois
- The Growth of RCA
- Intra-Urban Mobility in Omaha

Social and community issues are covered by items including:

- Advancing Public Health 1939-1940
- Guides to Cultural Organizations
- Models for the Blind

Original artistic work published by the FWP include:

- The Indians' Protest, a poem-play by Elma Scheel and others
- Play Room, a radio script by Riley Hughes
- Blizzard, short stories by George W. Hall

