

Works Progress Administration (WPA) Historical Records Survey

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The year 1929 will always live in infamy in the minds of many Americans. The infamous stock market crash coupled with the Great Depression that followed had a terrible impact on many Americans. Herbert Hoover and his successor, Franklin D. Roosevelt formulated many relief programs to attempt to stem the tide of misery and poverty throughout the country. The efforts were met with some success and many failures.

One of the most successful ventures was establishment of the Works Progress Administration (WPA). The WPA was the largest project among the many programs developed during the New Deal. For genealogists, one aspect of the WPA has been especially important. The Historical Records Survey under the WPA created many inventories and records which have benefited the entire genealogical research community. The WPA was established as the Work Projects Administration by executive order on 6 May 1935. In 1939 the agency's name was changed to Works Progress Administration. Before the agency was liquidated in 1943, it became the biggest relief program in U.S. history, providing employment for millions of people.

Under the auspices of the WPA, workers went to archives, historical societies, public and university libraries and compiled inventories of manuscript collections. They went to courthouses, town halls, offices in large cities, and vital statistics offices and inventoried records. Besides compiling indexes, they also transcribed some of the records they found. The impact on genealogical research in today's era has been profound. Most researchers have used many of these items at some point in the research process

Highlights of the most useful information from a genealogical research perspective include:

1. Burial listing in cemeteries
2. Federal and state census indexes
3. Indexes to naturalization records
4. Indexes to newspapers
5. Inventories of records found in county courthouses
6. Descriptions of manuscripts found in various libraries, private collections, and agencies
7. Place-name guides
8. Inventories of church records including the range of years and content covered by a church's christening records, and the names of those buried in church cemeteries
9. Historical narratives of slaves, immigrants, native Americans and other groups as part of the American Folklore Project

From the standpoint of genealogical and historical research, the WPA Historical Records Survey produced a tremendous legacy of information that may have otherwise been lost due to age and neglect. While many WPA workers were engaged in projects to build up our internal infrastructure such as bridges, roads, county fairgrounds, and airports, another major project involved having workers compile what became known as the Works Project Administration Historical Records Survey.

The Historical Records Survey Program focused on the following objectives:

1. The task of creating and organizing bibliographies, inventories, indexes, and other historical materials were prepared by out-of-work historians, lawyers, teachers, researchers, and clerical workers.
2. The long term goal was to organize historical materials, particularly the unpublished government documents and records which are basic in the administration of local government and provide valuable data for students of political, economic, and social history.
3. Create or update archival guides to facilitate and enhance the daily administration by federal and local government officials.
4. Create guides to assist the local business, legal, and educational communities whose functions and success depend on information from public records to conduct daily activities.
5. Inventories produced by the Historical Records Survey Program attempted to do more than merely provide lists of records. The long term goal was to sketch the historical background of the county or other unit of government, and to describe precisely, and in detail, the organization and function of the governmental agencies whose records were listed.

Family historians continue to reap the benefits of these works, which survive in original, microfilm, and published forms in libraries and archives all over the United States. Workers designated for these projects were involved in activities such as:

1. Compiling inventories of official records of thousands of communities.
2. Compile historical narratives and facts about the lives of thousands of Americans.
3. Help create usable indexes to important official records. In many cases, this was the first time any type of index was created.
4. Help create a centralized record keeping system that was uniform throughout the country.
5. Locate millions of official records that the federal/state or local government knew had been compiled but were missing from the courthouse or other facility that supposedly housed them.

Genealogists should be aware of the WPA publications in the areas in which they are conducting research. In many states, historical records survey programs were established as a branch or division of the federal WPA. Other states had a state WPA, such as the Indiana Works Project Administration. While the organization of the compiling entities may have varied from state to state, any indexes, collections of interviews and photographs, surveys, guides, and histories associated with the WPA are worth exploring.

Examples of this wealth of information include:

1. Indexes of federal and some state census records including the Soundex for 1880, 1900, 1910, and 1920)
2. Soundex to naturalization petitions in various jurisdictions throughout the country
3. Bibliographies of historical and local history materials
4. Inventories of courthouse, church, cemetery, and other related records
5. Life histories in narratives
6. Historical and family photographs
7. Artwork

Historical, genealogical, and many local history collections usually have many of these materials in their collections. The amount would obviously vary depending on the size of the library and collection. Some WPA materials are difficult to locate because of how they were cataloged. Some systems catalog items

and make specific links to WPA as a subject or compiler. Others catalog these items based on the subject matter and have no links to the WPA as a compiling authority. When searching for these types of materials, patrons are advised to search by title and/or subject keyword using the following search terms listed below.

1. WPA
2. Work Project Administration
3. Works Progress Administration
4. United States – Work Progress Administration or Works Project Administration
5. (Name of Jurisdiction) – Works Project Administration or Works Progress Administration

If you are looking for a general listing of all the materials compiled, the subject heading listed under the first four classifications should give you the broadest listing of materials. For those seeking to limit their search by geographical jurisdiction, category #5 is the best strategy. This is where you can add search terms such as the city, state, or county, of interest. Because of the scope and varying content in the works compiled by the WPA, it is often difficult to pin down what exactly is available for a particular area. That is why you should try multiple search terms when browsing various library catalogs. There are also numerous sites on the Internet that contain material compiled from the WPA or bibliographical references and where to locate the items for research purposes. Reference to these Internet sources will be presented throughout this study guide.

The National Archives & Records Administration and The Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah have the two most comprehensive collections of materials generated as part of the WPA historical records surveys. To determine what materials are available in the Family History Library, their local Family History Centers, or through inter-library loan at one of their affiliate libraries, the Family History Library Catalog feature on Family Search <http://www.familysearch.org> has a comprehensive listing of materials available.

The National Archives and Records Administration website contains a detailed listing of what records were generated during the WPA project and where these can be found at the various National Archives branch archives throughout the country. The link to the National Archives site is NARA: RG 69--Records of the Work Projects Administration <http://www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records/groups/069.html>.

Copies of WPA generated materials are available at many libraries throughout the country. As stated earlier, the amount of materials will depend on the size of the library and local circumstances. Many college academic libraries and public libraries designated as federal depositories often have collections of varying sizes. To locate a designated federal depository library near your place of residence, visit the following website <http://www.gpo.gov/libraries/> and search their catalog online prior to your visit to determine if they have any relevant WPA materials. State archives are another excellent source for locating WPA materials for the specific state of interest. These repositories will often have collections for the state as well as many counties within state itself. To view a listing of websites for all 50 state archives, visit the following link: <http://www.searchforancestors.com/statearchives.html>.

In addition to the previously discussed options, there are several other major repositories with large genealogical collections that hold major portions of WPA materials within their holdings. The eleven facilities listed below are considered the largest in terms of holdings and scope of coverage. I've included the websites for each facility mentioned. Please note that this is by no means a complete listing of major repositories. There are many other libraries that have excellent collections on a smaller scale.

1. Allen County Library (Fort Wayne, Indiana) <http://www.acpl.lib.in.us/genealogy/>
2. Atlanta-Fulton County Library (Atlanta, Georgia) <http://www.af.public.lib.ga.us/>

3. Denver Public Library (Denver, Colorado) <http://history.denverlibrary.org/>
4. Los Angeles Public Library (Los Angeles, California)
<http://www.lapl.org/central/history.html>
5. Library of Congress (Washington DC) <http://www.loc.gov/rr/genealogy/>
6. Mid-Continent Library (Independence, Missouri) <http://www.mymcpl.org/genealogy>
7. National Archives & Records Administration (Branches located throughout the United States) <http://www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records/groups/069.html>
8. Newberry Library (Chicago, Illinois) <http://www.newberry.org/genealogy/collections.html>
9. New England Historical Genealogical Society Library (Boston Massachusetts)
<http://www.americanancestors.org/library-usage-guide/>
10. New York Public Library (Manhattan, New York)
<http://www.nypl.org/locations/schwarzman/milstein-division-us-history-local-history-genealogy>
11. Western Reserve Historical Society Library (Cleveland, Ohio)
<http://www.wrhs.org/index.php/library>

WPA Historical Records Survey Overview

This section provides a brief description of the most important record types that were compiled and organized during the WPA project time period. Except for certain federally sponsored projects, state and local governments helped finance and supervise WPA work projects. It should be noted that the records I have included here are considered the most beneficial from a genealogical and historical research perspective.

While most of the major records have survived and are available for public research, some indexes and other record types that were generated were discarded because at the time of their compilation, a decision was made that they were not important enough to keep. Sadly, most of those appear to have been destroyed. However, when searching in a given jurisdiction, one should search any record types that appear in the catalog. Even though a directive may have been sent out to destroy these records which were deemed unimportant, the orders were not always followed. Hence the records may still exist even though they do not appear in surviving WPA documentation! They were saved and cataloged without any reference to their original WPA status.

The WPA operated at four organizational levels - the central administration at Washington, D.C., regional offices, state administrations, and district offices. There are three WPA National Archives microfilm publications also known as NARA Records Group 60:

1. T935 "Index to Reference Cards for Work Project Administration Project Files, 1935-1937 (79 rolls)
2. T936 "Index to Reference Cards for Work Project Administration Project Files 1938" (15 rolls)
3. T937, "Index to Reference Cards for Work Project Administration Project Administration Project Files, 1939-1942" (19 rolls)

Indexes to Federal Census & Naturalization Records

The Soundex Index to the U.S. population census is probably the most-used WPA work. While not an error-free finding tool, Soundex indexes to the 1880, 1900, 1910, and 1920 censuses, microfilmed by the National Archives, have launched research projects for millions of family historians.

Other heavily used indexes created by the WPA and available through the WPA and available through the National Archives (custodian of the original documents) and through the Family History Library in Salt Lake City are naturalization indexes such as the "Soundex Index to Naturalization Petitions for the United States District and Circuit Courts in the various jurisdictions nationwide. For example, the Soundex for the Northern District of Illinois and Immigration and Naturalization Service District #9, 1840-1950 includes more than 1.5 million index cards for naturalizations that took place in Chicago and northern Illinois, as well as in parts of Indiana, Iowa, and Wisconsin. Two additional indexes of interest to a large number of researchers are the Soundex Name Index to New England Naturalization Petitions, 1790-1906, and the Index to Naturalization Petitions of the United States District Court for the Eastern District of New York, 1865-1957.

Public and Vital Records Guides

From the standpoint of most researchers, these are considered the most relevant and accurate of all the WPA records. Most publications in this category are divided into four sections: births, marriages, deaths, and divorces. In many cases each section includes a brief description of what the legal requirements were governing these specific records types. For example, researchers will learn when civil registration was required, what areas of the state may have been keeping records before legally required to do so, and what county and state officials may have been responsible for these records during particular time periods. The entries often provide valuable clues regarding the unavailability of some records and other options to search. In some cases, the compilers provided citations to the state statutes or codes governing each of these record groups.

A detailed listing for both the state records and county records follows the important legal requirements sections for each of the four record groups. The state records sections include specific information about what data was recorded on the record during the various time periods. It also indicates the size of the records collection. The county records sections list the counties for each record group and describe the records kept by time period. While the exact format may vary by state and jurisdiction, most states tended to follow a similar style.

County Archives Inventories

These inventories provide a complete collection of records that were under the jurisdiction of the county archives at the time of the WPA project. Each county within the state has a volume. Some larger counties may have generated multiple volumes. Unfortunately, some states were missed but for those who were included, this is the most comprehensive research tool in existence.

The content of these inventories will vary. However, the general contents usually include inventories of specific official county records, citations, and descriptions for the county with a detailed table of contents. Most volumes include maps of the area at the time of WPA, history of the county and the county's governmental structure is provided, as well as a historical accounting of its record-keeping system. An added benefit for many historical and genealogical researchers is the general history section. In many WPA compilations, the general history sections are heavily footnoted, and often include an organization chart of the county government at the time of compilation. This chart or timeline can assist researchers in understanding the reporting and recording structures. Taking the time to examine this feature often allows the researcher to know the historical context in which these records were created. The historical context may open up additional avenues for research.

Many compilations also contain sections devoted to the various county offices and their primary/secondary functions. These sections often contain information that detail specific county offices and their respective records. Researchers will find sections ranging from the county clerk, court of chancery, and board of taxation, mosquito control commission, police/sheriff, city or county jail, school board, etc. This information may shed light on the following types of information:

1. History of the office or department
2. Description of the records maintained by the office
3. Inventory of each record group.
4. Where records were housed at the time of compilation.

Researchers should note that in most cases, the location where they are housed today. The two best sources to contact in situations of this nature are the local historical and/or genealogical society in the area.

Church Records & Religious Archives Inventories

These inventories usually list by county every known church in the state or county at the time of the survey. Along with the name of the church and denomination, researchers can find the church's location. Some of these inventories can range in size from 50 to 300+ pages. Some surveys are broken down by denominations. Volumes dealing with the larger denominations such as the Southern Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Roman Catholics and the Roman Catholic Church may provide details about the names and locations of churches, along with the association, district, conference, or diocese to which the church belonged and the name of the pastor, priest, or preacher. It also notes if the church is defunct or no longer active.

In some of the large states such as New York, California, Illinois, the abundance of churches was such that circumstances required a separate inventory be made for each of the major denominations such as Roman Catholic, Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterians, Baptists, etc. As the geographic area covered by these inventories of religious bodies shrunk, the amount of data provided for each church increased dramatically.

Miscellaneous Projects

By the 1930's there was some realization in various levels of government and academia that many historical records were deteriorating from neglect or being destroyed due to a perceived lack of interest or questionable political interests. In terms of political interests, some of this interest was motivated by some of the following issues:

1. Identify those responsible for many of the policies that led to the economic collapse in 1929.
2. Realization that many of our most treasured records and memories from the American Revolution, Civil War, and our historic past were deteriorating from neglect, destruction etc.
3. Realization that the nationwide economic misery caused by the Depression, was leading to more activity and popularity within various subversive groups. There was a perception that the country needed to be reminded of its patriotic past to offset the attempts by these groups to overthrow our government and way of life.

This perception led to the efforts in some states where the WPA workers undertook even more aggressive programs regarding records of historical value. These efforts proved to be extremely time and labor intensive. Five significant goals were accomplished in the process:

1. The process accomplished the goal of providing jobs for an extended period of time for many people.
2. Many historical documents were preserved.

3. For the first time, many of these historical documents and records were indexed thoroughly versus partial or incomplete entries.
4. In some cases, these records and documents were indexed for the first time!
5. They created finding aids and indexes that have proven to be valuable for research to day.

An example of this would be vital records. In most states, the WPA workers tackled the process of indexing birth, marriage, and death records for all counties from the earliest time of civil registration to at least 1920. These books have become some of the state's most frequently used sources by family historians. From the standpoint of political considerations, the original intent was to provide the Democratic bureaucracy with a specific figure of how many individuals would qualify for President Roosevelt's various New Deal programs. These figures also provided solid irrefutable numerical evidence against the Republican Party in local, state, and federal elections dating from 1932 through the 1970's!

Another valuable project was a series of county books called "indexes of names of persons and of firms." This project worked to identify all the significant published histories for a county and to compile a single-alphabet index to all the people, organizations, and institutions listed in each county's works. The ultimate goal was to have this compiled nationwide. However, by the late 1930's, growing concerns about international problems which would eventually lead to American involvement in World War II led to the program being terminated before its completion. While the nationwide aspect of this program was never completed, researchers tracing ancestral connections in those areas completed have another excellent source for information. Later on, the project was considered so worthwhile that the various state libraries, local genealogical societies, and entities such as the Family History Library in Salt Lake City as well as Allen County Public Library in Fort Wayne continued these efforts to complete the project after the fact..

Interviewing former slaves was one of the more widely recognized WPA projects. Numerous volumes have been produced that contain transcriptions of these valuable oral histories. Researchers can glean details about an individual's life, where he or she may have lived, and the families with which he or she may have associated. Many of these WPA slave narratives have been reprinted by publishers such as Greenwood Press, and Genealogical Publishing Company. There are numerous websites that also contain these narratives as well.

The Works Project Administration compiled so many useful sources for genealogists in chronicling the lives and times of their ancestors that it is no wonder many researchers long for another similar project that could use federal tax dollars and many unemployed men and woman who have lost their jobs since 2007 to index records, compile guides, conduct inventories, and interview ancestors!

WPA Records: Notes of Caution

From a genealogical research perspective, nobody with any sense of history and genealogical expertise can argue with the many benefits that WPA records bring to the research field. However, as is the case with any type of genealogical record, one must take every piece of information with a grain of salt, so to speak, until it is documented with other information. The indexes and other information found in these compilations were created by human beings. Anything a human being can do right, they can also do wrong. In some cases, the records that were examined by WPA records had deteriorated dramatically or the handwriting on early documents was unreadable. They might have had to make an educated guess on names and spellings just like modern day researchers encounter on a daily basis.

The following points listed below are indicative of some of the issues that researchers should take into consideration with WPA records.

1. WPA Historical Records Survey records for some areas of the country have been criticized for their lack of comprehensiveness and accuracy. However, this is always a concern for any type of secondary or compiled information. The accuracy of any record type is dependent on how informed the informant or compiler was.
2. The WPA might not have compiled a particular type of work for every county in a given state. Counties were sometimes missed in the compilation of inventories for reasons that are not especially clear. Remember, too, that World War II brought the WPA and its projects to an end. Many projects were far from complete when WPA activities were halted.
3. When it comes to the many oral histories, unfortunately not every state is available because some states chose not to participate. Many projects were continuations of non-WPA projects already underway by regional universities so additional histories may exist outside of those found in the Library of Congress. Here are some points to remember about oral histories:
 - a. **Oral histories vary in terms of length and quality.** Some of the histories read like excerpts of well-crafted novels. Others are more form-like.
 - b. **Researchers generally transcribed their interviews in the dialect of the interviewees without the benefit of tape recorders.** While the original dialect and vocabulary can add to the fascination of the interviews, it can also prove frustrating at times. Especially disconcerting is the matter-of-fact manner in which many interviewers address ethnic and racial stereotypes.
 - c. **Interviewers often spent considerable preliminary time in casual conversation with their interviewees.** While the goal was to establish trust, this also left the oral histories open to exaggerations and selective or faulty memories.

Locating WPA Record Compilations

Locating the various WPA compilations is not the easiest task for researchers. Libraries and various repositories have a variety of ways to catalog holdings. Many original WPA compilations have been republished by various authors, editors, genealogical/historical societies, etc. In some cases, the new titles will not reflect their original WPA origins. This exclusion means that a simple search suing the term ***WPA or Works Progress Administration Records*** may or may not being up all possible items. The following tips will help locate many of the surviving WPA records compilations.

1. Check the website for the state library in the state you are conducting research. The following website <http://www.libraryspot.com/libraries/statelibraries.htm> contains links to all 50 state libraries in the United States. Each state library website allows researchers to search their holdings online. Researchers should never underestimate the value of state library collections.
2. Check the website and resources for the state historical society in the state you are conducting research. Many state historical societies either have research collections at a private facility or within a large public or academic library near their locality. Regardless of where their research collection is housed, there would be a kink on their website.
3. Check the website for the county historical society. Or, check the local libraries in the towns and counties where research is being conducted, as well as major genealogical research facilities such as the Family History Library, the Allen County Public Library, the Historical Society of Wisconsin, the New England Historic Genealogical Society, and the DAR Library.

Inventory of WPA Collections

As previously mentioned, locating a detailed comprehensive listing of all records generated during the Historical Records Survey presents many challenges for reasons discussed earlier. However, from a genealogical research perspective, the list that follows will provide a basic overview of what has survived.

Most of the information listed below can be found in a variety of locations:

1. Most state libraries
2. Major academic research institutions within the state of interest
3. Major public libraries with large genealogical collections such as:
 - a. Allen County Public Library in Fort Wayne, Indiana
 - b. Mid-Continent Public Library in Independence, Missouri
 - c. Newberry Library in Chicago, Illinois
4. Historical Societies Research Facility
 - a. Western Reserve Historical Society Cleveland, Ohio
 - b. Family History Society Library, Salt Lake City, Utah
5. National Archives - Washington, DC and Regional Branches
6. Local public libraries with popular genealogy/local history collection

The inventory overview focuses on the record types of most interest to genealogists. Since the WPA and its Historical records Survey were terminated as World War II became more important and costly, the information covers the continental 48 states and Washington, DC. However, not all states participated. It will also be obvious that not all jurisdictions within a state or county participated either. There were situations where the WPA planned a project in a given locality but due to a number of circumstances, the project was never initiated. This is where many local historical and genealogical societies stepped in and proceeded after the fact in the project. For those WPA records that were actually compiled, they have been listed below by states under the following subject classifications:

1. Federal Records and Archives
2. Vital Records
3. Public Records and Archives
4. State Records and Archives
5. Municipal and Town Records/Archives
6. County Records and Archives
7. Records and Directories of Churches and Religious Organizations
8. Microfilmed Records and Archives

1. Federal Records and Archives (ship registers and enrollments)

California (Eureka)

Louisiana (New Orleans)

Maine (Machias)

Massachusetts (Barnstable, Boston, Charleston, New Bedford and Plymouth)

Oregon (Marshfield and Portland)

Pennsylvania (Philadelphia)

Rhode Island (Bristol-Warren and Providence)

2. Vital Records and Statistics

Alabama	Massachusetts	South Dakota
Arizona	Michigan	Texas
California	Minnesota	Utah
Colorado	Mississippi	Washington
Florida	Missouri	West Virginia
Georgia	Montana	Wisconsin
Idaho	Nebraska	Wyoming
Illinois	Nevada	
Indiana	New Hampshire	
Iowa	New Jersey	
Kansas	New York	

Kentucky	North Carolina
Louisiana	North Dakota

3. Public Records and Archives

Mississippi: Adams County

New Jersey: Gloucester County

New York: Staten Island and Newtown Counties

Tennessee: Knox and Shelby Counties

4. State Records and Archives

California (Northern): Immigration and Housing

Illinois: State Council of Defense

Maryland: Allegany, Anne Arundel, Carroll, Garrett, Howard, Montgomery, Washington, Wicomico Counties

Michigan: State Police Records

New Jersey: Naturalization Records

Oklahoma: Miscellaneous State and County Records

Rhode Island: Legislation Concerning Vital Statistics

Utah: Census of Weber County and State of Deseret

5. Municipal and Town Records/Archives

Connecticut: Inventories of Fairfield, Hartford, and New Haven Counties.

Georgia: Inventories of Miscellaneous Cook County Records

Indiana: Municipal Government in Indiana

Louisiana: Inventories of Municipal Archives for Franklinton and Thibodaux Parishes

Massachusetts : Inventories of Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden, Middlesex, Norfolk, Suffolk, and Worcester Counties

Michigan: Inventories of Wayne County Records

New Hampshire: Inventories of Belknap, Hillsboro, Merrimack, and Rockingham Counties

New Jersey: Inventories of Essex, Hudson, Monmouth, and Morris Counties

New York City: Inventories of Bronx and Richmond Boroughs

Ohio: Inventories of Cuyahoga County

Rhode Island: Inventories of Kent and Providence Counties

Texas: Inventory of Brazoria County

Utah: Inventory of Ogden County

Vermont: Inventories of Addison, Chittenden, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille, Orleans, Rutland, Windham, and Windsor Counties.

Wisconsin: Inventories of Cudahy, Wauwatosa, and Greendale Counties

6. County Records and Archives

Alabama: Inventories of Records for Clay, Colbert, Cinecuhi, Cullman, Green, Hale, Lauderdale, Lowndes, Madison, Marengo, Sumter, Talladega, Wilcox, and Winston Counties.

Arizona: Inventories for Maricopa, Pima, and Santa Cruz Counties

Arkansas: Inventories for Baxter, Benton, Carroll, Cleburne, Cleveland, Cross, Faulkner, Hot Springs, Izard, Jackson, Madison, Monroe, Montgomery, Polk, Saline, Scott, Seearcy Counties)

California: Inventories for Alameda, Fresno, Kern, Los Angeles, Marin, Mono, Napa, San Benito, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Francisco, San Luis Obispo, San Mateo, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, and Ventura Counties

Colorado: Inventories for Alamosa, Arapahoe, Bent, Conejos, Costilla, Fremont, Garfield, Hinsdale, Larimer, Logan, Morgan, Phillips, Prowers, San Miguel, Washington, and Yuma Counties

Delaware: Inventory for New Castle County

Florida: Inventories for Charlotte, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Hardee, Hendry, Leon, Okaloosa, Pinellas, Sarasota, and Wakulla Counties

Georgia: Inventories for Chatham, Clinch, Cook, Dougherty, Echols, Jefferson, Lee, Muscogee, and Richmond Counties

Idaho: Inventories for Bingham, Boundary, Clark, Kostenai, Lemhi, Minidoka, Nez Perce, Power, and Teton Counties

Illinois: Inventories for Adams, Brown, Carroll, Champaign, Clark, Cumberland, Dewitt, Douglas, Effingham, Fayette, Franklin, Jackson, Jo Daviess, Knox, Livingston, Logan, Macopin, Menard, Montgomery, Morgan, Moultrie, Ogle, Peoria, Piatt, Pike, Rock Island, Salina, Sangamon, Scott, Shelby, St. Clair, Stephenson, and Vermilion Counties

Indiana: Inventories for Allen, Blackford, Boone, Clay, Delaware, Fulton, Greene, Howard, Jay, LaPorte, Marion, Marshall, Monroe, Morgan, Posey, St. Joseph, Shelby, Tippecanoe, Tipton, Vanderburgh, Warrick, and Wells Counties

Iowa: Inventories for Carroll, Cherokee, Dallas, Dubuque, Ada, Jasper, Montgomery, Polk, Sac, Taylor, and Woodbury Counties

Kansas: Inventories for Bourbon, Cherokee, Franklin, Gove, Graham, Gray, Greenwood, Johnson, Montgomery, Morris, Osage, Phillips, Seward, and Shawnee Counties

Louisiana: Inventories for Allen, Assumption, Beauregard, Bossier, Caleasien, Grant, Jefferson, Lafayette, Lafourche, Morehouse, Natchitoches, and Orleans Counties

Massachusetts: Inventory of Essex County Records

Michigan: Inventories for Alger, Alpena, Baraga, Bay, Calhoun, Cheboygan, Genesee, Iosco, Iron, Jackson, Marquette, and Muskegon Counties

Minnesota: Inventories for Aiken, Anoka, Beltrami, Benton, Big Stone, Blue Earth, Cass, Chippewa, Dakota, Dodge, Douglas, Fairbault, Fillmore, Freeborn, Goodhue, Grant, Houston, Hubbard, Jackson, Kanabac, Lincoln, Marshall, Martin, Meeker, Mille Lacs, Morrison, Murray, Nicollet, Nobles, Olmsted, Otter Tail, Pipestone, Redwood, Renville, Rice, Rock, Scott, Sherburne, Stearns, Traverse, Wabasha, Washington, Wright, and Yellow Medicine Counties

Mississippi: Inventories for Amite, Forrest, Grenada, Humphreys, Lamar, Pearl River, Tippah, Tunica, and Walhall Counties

Missouri: Inventories for Cass, Cole, Dallas, Henry, Johnson, Linn, McDonald, Marion, Jasper, Pettis, Pike, Reynolds, Ripley, and Shelby Counties

Montana: Inventories for Beverhead, Carbon, Flathead, Gallatin, Lincoln, Madison, Mineral Lake, Missoula, Park, Ravalli, Sanders, Silver Bow, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, and Toole Counties

Nebraska: Inventories for Gosper, Greeley, Howard, Loup, Merrick, Seward, and Webster Counties

Nevada: Inventories for Douglas, Elko, Eureka, Mineral, Nye, Ormsby, and Washoe Counties

New Hampshire: Inventories for Belknap, Carroll, Cheshire, Coos, Grafton, and Merrimack Counties

New Jersey: Inventories for Bergen, Morris, Ocean, and Passaic Counties

New Mexico: Inventories for Bernalillo, Colfax, Dona Ana, Eddy, Grant, Hidalgo, Luna, Mora, Otero, Sandoval, San Miguel, Sierra, Torrance, Union, and Valencia Counties

New York City: Inventories for Bronx, Kings and Richmond Borough and Counties

New York State: Inventories for Albany, Broome, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Chemung, and Ulster Counties

North Carolina: Inventories for Entire State in 3 Volumes

North Dakota: Inventories for Golden Valley, Mercer, and Williams Counties

Ohio: Adams, Allen, Ashland, Athens, Brown, Columbiana, Cuyahoga, Fayette, Franklin, Geauga, Hamilton, Hancock, Jackson, Knox, Lake, Lorain, Lucas, Madison, Montgomery, Pike, Ross, Scioto, Seneca, Stark, Summit, Trunbull, and Washington Counties

Oklahoma: Inventories for Atoka, Beckham, Cherokee, Cimarron, Haskell, Lincoln, McIntosh, Mayes, Muskogee, Pittsburg, and Pushmataha County

Oregon: Inventories for Benton, Clatsop, Coos, Hood River, Josephine, Klamath, Linn, Morrow,

Multnomah, Tillamook, Umatilla, Wasco, and Washington Counties

Pennsylvania: Inventories for Adams, Beaver, Berks, Blair, Bradford, Delaware, Erie, Fayette, Forest, Greene, Lancaster, Lawrence, Luzerne, Warren, Washington, Wayne, and Westmoreland Counties

South Carolina: Inventories for Bennett, Buffalo, Clark, Faulk, Haakon, Jackson, Millette, Miner, and Washabaugh Counties

Tennessee: Inventories for Anderson, Bedford, Blount, Bradley, Cheatham, Crockett, Hamilton, Haywood, Loudon, Rutherford, Sullivan, Tipton, and Wilson Counties

Texas: Inventories for Bandera, Bastrop, Brown, Caldwell, Calhoun, Denton, DeWitt, Fayette, Gillespie, Gregg, Guadalupe, Hays, Hood, Jackson, Marion, Milam, Mills, Orange, Robertson, Rockwall, Sabine, Somervell, Uvalde, and Wilson Counties

Utah: Inventories for Box Elder, Carbon, Daggett, Emery, Grand, Morgan, Sanpete, Tooele, Uintah, Utah, Wasatch, and Weber Counties

Vermont: Inventory for Lamoille County

Virginia: Inventories for Amelia, Brunswick, Chesterfield, Dinwiddie, Isle of Wight, Middlesex, Powhatan, Prince George, and Southampton Counties

Washington: Inventories for Adams, Asotin, Benton, Chelan, Cowlitz, Garfield, Lewis, Lincoln, Pond Oreille, Skagit, Spokane, Stevens, and Yakima Counties

West Virginia: Inventories for Gilmer, Grant, Lincoln, Marion, Mineral, Monroe, Pendleton, Pocahontas, Putnam, Randolph, Ritchie, Roane, and Taylor Counties

Wisconsin: Inventories for Barron, Buffalo, Chippewa, Clark, Douglas, Dunn, Eau Claire, Grant, Jackson, LaCross, Marathon, Monroe, Oneida, Pepin, and Polk Counties

Wyoming: Inventories for Goshen, Laramie, Lincoln, Park, Platte, and Sweetwater Counties

7. Directories of Churches and Religious Organizations

Arizona	Iowa	Oregon
Arkansas	Louisiana	Rhode Island
California	Maine	Tennessee
Delaware	Michigan	Utah
District of Columbia	Minnesota	Vermont
Florida	Montana	Wisconsin
Idaho	New Jersey	Wyoming
Illinois	New Mexico	
Indiana	Oklahoma	

8. Church Records and Archives

Alabama	Massachusetts	North Dakota
Arizona	Michigan	Ohio
Arkansas	Minnesota	Oklahoma
California (Northern)	Mississippi	Pennsylvania
Colorado	Missouri	Rhode Island
Connecticut	Montana	Tennessee
Delaware	Nevada	Utah
District of Columbia	Nebraska	Vermont
Florida	New Hampshire	Washington

Georgia	New Jersey	West Virginia
Illinois	New York City	Wisconsin
Louisiana	New York State	Wyoming
Maryland	North Carolina	

9. Abbreviations on microfilmed records, documents, images, etc. held in Archives, Repositories, & Academic Libraries

A = Apprentice Records	M = Marriages
B = Births	S = Slave Registers
I = Immigration	T = Tax Lists
L = Land or Deeds	W = Wills or Probates

Indiana Allen County Rolls 61 - 64 BLMW
 Clark County Rolls 17 - 19, 58 BIW
 Dearborn County Rolls 54 - 57 BLM
 Floyd County Rolls 13 - 16 BM
 Franklin County Rolls 48 - 53 ALMW
 Gibson County Rolls 34 - 37 BMW
 Harrison County Rolls 7 - 12 BMW
 Jefferson County Rolls 20 - 24 BLMTW
 Jennings County Rolls 25 - 27 BLMW
 Knox County Rolls 28 - 33, 65 BLMSW
 Perry County Rolls 59 - 60 LM
 Posey County Rolls 38 - 40 BLMW
 Scott County Rolls 1 & 2 BLMW
 Spencer County Rolls 46 - 47 MW
 Warrick County Rolls 41 - 46 BLMW
 Washington County Rolls 3 - 6 LMW
 Louisiana State: 1911 - 1941 B
 New Orleans 1847 - 1901 B
 New Jersey Feb 1852 I
 1666 - 1786 L
 1851 - 1873 I (minors)

Some Prominent WPA Historical Records Survey Websites

The websites listed below will provide readers with a sample of what is available on the Internet. Many of these sites will also include links to similar pages as well. Please be advised that this is not a comprehensive listing, but the links will take you to many additional sources. Many of these links will also contain bibliographies for additional sources of information.

General Informational Listings

American Life Histories, Manuscripts from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1940
 (American Memory Project, Library of Congress)
<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/wpaintro/>

NARA: RG 69--Records of the Work Projects Administration (holdings!)
www.nara.gov/guide/rg069.html

WPA Exhibition (order form)
<http://205.166.161.4/lii10200.htm>

African American
African American Mosaic--WPA, Library of Congress (portraits & posters)
www.loc.gov/exhibits/african/wpa.html

American Slave Narratives: An Online Anthology University of Virginia (oral histories)
<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/wpa/wpahome.html>

Slave Narrative database at Ancestry.com (oral histories)
(Ancestry subscriber database)
www.ancestry.com/search/rectype/biohist/slavnarr/main.htm

State Listings

Websites listed below are arranged alphabetically by state except for the first entry below which includes a listing for all states that participated or were included. Researchers should remember that not all states were included in the Historical Records Survey for a variety of reasons. When the project was terminated in 1943, various historical societies, and state archives stepped in after the conclusion of World War II and resurrected the project in a variety of ways. This is important because many followed the format established during the Historical Records Survey. In some cases, they may have used some of the same people if they could be located to gather information, conduct interviews, etc.

List by State (life histories)
<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/wpaintro/wpastate.html>

Alabama
WPA Life Histories, Alabama
<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/wpaintro/alcat.html>

Arizona
Arizona WPA Records, by Jeannie Rogers
www.jcrogers.com/wpaintro.htm

Arizona Territorial Census, 1864
(Ancestry subscriber database)
www.ancestry.com/search/rectype/inddb/3121.htm

Colorado
WPA Photo Collection at the Colorado State Archives
www.archives.state.co.us/wpa/home.htm

Connecticut
WPA Life Histories, Connecticut
<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/wpaintro/ctcat.html>

Florida
WPA Life Histories, Florida
<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/wpaintro/flcat.html>

Georgia

Work Progress Administration (WPA) projects in Georgia

www.libs.uga.edu/hargrett/selections/index.html

Illinois

Illinois Historical Records Survey of the Works Projects Administration Record Group 954.00

www.sos.state.il.us/departments/archives/di/954_002.htm

Indiana

Indiana WPA Indices

(Tri-State Genealogical Society)

www.rootsweb.com/~intsgs/wpa.html

Cass County, Indiana WPA Birth Record Index for 1882-1920

www.garlic.com/~marshall/CassCoBR/index.htm

Louisiana

New Orleans Public Library, WPA Photograph Collection, Louisiana Division

<http://nutrias.org/~nopl/photos/wpa/wpaphotos.htm>

Maine

WPA Life Histories, Maine

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/wpaintro/mecat.html>

Massachusetts

WPA Life Histories, Massachusetts

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/wpaintro/macat.html>

Minnesota

Index to Rochester, MN newspapers (1859-1912)

(Olmsted County Historical Society)

<http://catalog.selco.lib.mn.us/data/ochs/wpasub.cfm>

Missouri

WPA Guide to the "Show Me" State

(Publication for sale)

<http://system.missouri.edu/upress/fall1998/wpa.htm>

Montana

Montana State University Libraries, Merrill G. Burlingame Special Collections WPA records, 1935-1942

<http://www.lib.montana.edu/collect/spcoll/findaid/2336.html>

WPA Print Collection, University of Montana/Missoula

<http://www.umt.edu/partv/famus/print/wpa/wpa.htm>

Nebraska

WPA Life Histories, Nebraska

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/wpaintro/necat.html>

New Hampshire

Works Project Administration: Historic American Buildings Survey of New Hampshire Papers, 1935-1941 (MC 33), Index of Names of People and Places

<http://www.izaak.unh.edu/specoll/mancoll/wpahabs4.htm>

New Mexico

WPA Life Histories, New Mexico

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/wpaintro/nmcat.html>

New York

WPA Life Histories, New York

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/wpaintro/nycat.html>

North Carolina

WPA Life Histories, North Carolina

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/wpaintro/nccat.html>

Oregon

WPA Life Histories, Oregon

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/wpaintro/orcat.html>

Rhode Island

WPA Life Histories, Rhode Island

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/wpaintro/ricat.html>

South Carolina

WPA Life Histories, South Carolina

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/wpaintro/sccat.html>

Texas

WPA Life Histories, Texas

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/wpaintro/txcat.html>

Utah

Works Progress Administration Collection, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah

www.lib.utah.edu/spc/photo/p169/p169.html

Inventory of the WPA Collection at the Utah State Historical Society

<http://history.utah.org/findaids/B00057/>

Vermont

WPA Life Histories, Vermont

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/wpaintro/vtcat.html>

Virginia

Virginia WPA Life Histories

<http://image.vtls.com:8000/bibdatabases/wpalabout.html>

Petersburg Public Library Newspaper Index

<http://image.vtls.com/collectionsV/PNabout.html>

Washington

WPA Life Histories, Washington

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/wpaintro/wacat.html>**Wisconsin**

WPA Life Histories, Wisconsin

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/wpaintro/wicat.html>**WPA Record Compilation Websites**

The list below contains a sampling of websites containing WPA compilations for research. Please remember that this is by no means intended to be a comprehensive list. Many of these websites contain links to similar sites and bibliographies of additional sources for further research.

American Life Histories, Manuscripts from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1940
 (American Memory Project, Library of Congress)

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/wpaintro/wpahome.html>

American Life Histories, Manuscripts from the Federal Writers Project: Listing by State
<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/wpaintro/wpastate.html>

African American Mosaic--WPA, Library of Congress Resource Guide for the Study of Black History and Culture

<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/african/afam012.html>

American Slave Narratives: An Online Anthology University of Virginia
<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/wpa/wpahome.html>

Slave Narrative database at Ancestry.com or available free at Ancestry Library Edition if your library subscribes to the library version of Ancestry.com
 (Ancestry subscriber database)
http://www.ancestry.com/search_rectype/biohist/slavnarr/main.htm

Alabama

ADAH Digital Archives-Alabama WPA Project

<http://216.226.178.196/cdm4/writer.php>**Arizona**

Arizona WPA Records, by Jeannie Rogers

<http://www.jcrogers.com/wpaintro.htm>

WPA Arizona Pioneer Interviews - Jean Carhart

http://www.getnet.com/~jcarhart/arizona_wpa_pioneer_interviews.htm

Arizona Territorial Census, 1864

(Ancestry subscriber database)

<http://www.ancestry.com/search/rectype/inddb/3121.htm>

Colorado

WPA Photo Collection at the Colorado State Archives

<http://www.colorado.gov/dpa/doit/archives/wpa/home.htm>

Florida

WPA Exhibition

<http://www.broward.org/library/bienes/lii10200.htm>

Georgia

Work Progress Administration (WPA) projects in Georgia

<http://www.libs.uga.edu/hargrett/selections/wpa/index.html>

Illinois

Illinois Historical Records Survey of the Works Projects Administration Record Group 954.00

http://www.sos.state.il.us/departments/archives/di/954_002.htm

Indiana

Indiana WPA Indexes

(Tri-State Genealogical Society)

<http://www.rootsweb.com/~intsgs/wpa.html>

Cass County, Indiana WPA Birth Record Index for 1882-1920

<http://www.garlic.com/~marshall/CassCoBR/index.htm>

Louisiana

New Orleans Public Library, WPA Materials at the New Orleans Public Library

<http://nutrias.org/~nopl/info/louinfo/wpa.htm>

New Orleans Public Library, Alphabetical Index of Changes in Street Names, Old and New Period 1852 to Current Date, Dec. 1st 1938

<http://nutrias.org/~nopl/info/louinfo/numberchanges/numberchanges.htm>

Minnesota

Index to Rochester, MN newspapers (1859-1912)

(Olmsted County Historical Society)

<http://www.selco.lib.mn.us/apps/ochs/wpasub.cfm>

Missouri

WPA Guide to the "Show Me" State

(Publication for sale)

<http://system.missouri.edu/upress/fall1998/wpa.htm>

Montana

Montana State University Libraries, Merrill G. Burlingame Special Collections WPA records, 1935-1942

<http://www.lib.montana.edu/collect/spcoll/findaid/2336.html>

WPA Print Collection, University of Montana/Missoula

<http://www.umt.edu/partv/famus/print/wpa/wpa.htm>

New Hampshire

Works Project Administration: Historic American Buildings Survey of New Hampshire Papers, 1935-1941 (MC 33), Index of Names of People and Places
<http://www.izaak.unh.edu/specoll/mancoll/wpahabs4.htm>

New Jersey

Camden, New Jersey, Johnson Cemetery
 (Ancestry.com subscriber database)
<http://www.ancestry.com/search/rectype/inddb/3507.htm>

Utah

Works Progress Administration Collection, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah
<http://www.lib.utah.edu/spc/photo/p169/p169.html>
 (From Photo Archives catalog)

Inventory of the WPA Collection at the Utah State Historical Society
<http://history.utah.org/findaids/B00057/>

Virginia

Virginia WPA Life Histories
<http://eagle.vsla.edu/wpa/>

Petersburg Public Library Newspaper Index
<http://lvaimage.lib.va.us/collectionsV/PN.html>

About the Index

<http://www.lva.lib.va.us/whatwehave/news/PNabout.htm>

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Baker, Ronald L. *Homeless, Friendless, and Penniless: The WPA Interviews with Former Slaves Living in Indiana.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, c2000.

Bordelon, Pamela, ed. 1999. *Go Gator and Muddy the Water: the Writings of Zora Neale Hurston from the Federal Writers' Project.* New York, NY: Norton Publishing, 1999.

Brent, Linda. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl.* New York, NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, c1861, 1983.

Greenwood, Val D. *Researcher's Guide to American Genealogy.* 3rd Edition. Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Company, c2000. Genealogy Reference 929.1 GREENWOOD

Hogan, Rosanne. *Research Cornerstones: WPA Telling Living History.* Ancestry Magazine 11 March 2006. <http://www.ancestry.com/learn/library/article.aspx?article=11101>

Jacobson, Judy. *Field Guide for Genealogists.* 2nd Edition. Baltimore, MD: Clearfield Publishing, c2003. Genealogy Reference 929.1072 JACOBSON

Johnson, Steven Paul. **WPA Historical Records Survey.** Internet.net Cemetery Records Online 28 July 1999. http://www.interment.net/column/records/wpa/wpa_history.htm

Pfeiffer, Laura Szucs. **Hidden Sources: Family History in Unlikely Places.** Salt Lake City, UT: Ancestry Publishing, c2000. Genealogy Reference 929.1072 PFEIFFER

Schweitzer, George K. **Handbook of Genealogical Sources.** Nashville, TN: George K. Schweitzer, c1996. Genealogy Reference 929.1072 SCHWEITZER

Smith, Juliana. **Works Project Administration.** Ancestry.com Learning Center. 09 September 2003. <http://learn.ancestry.com/LearnMore/Article.aspx?id=793>

Stockwell, Foster. **Sourcebook for Genealogical Research: Resources Alphabetically by Type and Location.** Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, c2004. Genealogy Reference 929.1 STOCKWELL

Szucs, Loretto Dennis. **The Source: Guidebook of American Genealogy.** 3rd Edition. Salt Lake City, UT: Ancestry Publishing Company, c2006. Genealogy Reference 929.1 SOURCE

----- **The WPA: 60-Year-Old Investment Still Yields High Dividends.**
by Loretto Dennis Szucs (Ancestry Magazine, May/June 1995, Vol. 13, No. 3)
<http://www.ancestry.com/library/view/ancmag/699.asp>

Witcher, Curt B. **Records of the Works Projects Administration.** Ancestry Magazine. May/June 2001.

NOTE: This study guide is meant to serve as an overview or outline for patrons using the genealogy collection at Fort Myers-Lee County Library. The compiler emphasizes that the information contained in this study guide should not serve as a substitute for taking the time to read one of the books or articles cited in the bibliography, or attend lectures given by the subject specialists cited as authors.

Compiled by Bryan L. Mulcahy, Reference Librarian, Fort Myers-Lee County Library, March 14, 2011.