

Collection #
P 0508

WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION PHOTOGRAPHS, CA. 1936–1943

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Processed by

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December 16, 2011

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Indiana Historical Society
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Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 1 photograph box

COLLECTION DATES: ca. 1936–1943

PROVENANCE: Dave Felland, Indianapolis, Ind., November 2011

RESTRICTIONS: None

COPYRIGHT:

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS: “A History of FERA and WPA Workers’ Education: The Indiana Experience, 1933–1943” (F526. H28 1984); Norwalk’s Collection of *WPA* era art (Works Progress Administration): Commissioned for Public Buildings, 1935-1941 (ND2638. N9 N67 2001); The *WPA* Historical Records Survey: a Guide to the Unpublished Inventories, Indexes, and Transcripts (Z1236. H437 1980); Homeless, Friendless, and Penniless: the *WPA* Interviews with Former Slaves Living in Indiana (E444. H66 2000)

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2011.0321

NOTES:

HISTORICAL SKETCH

The Works Progress Administration (WPA), which became the Work Projects Administration (1939–1943), was established by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on 6 May 1935 under the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1935. The WPA provided unemployed workers with jobs for eight years, giving support to ¼ of American families. The program was federally controlled, but relied on state sponsorship to enact projects. The majority of these projects involved construction activities, such as erecting and improving buildings, installing water mains, and building airports and runways. Other major endeavors involved education, including courses related to music, recreation, libraries, writing, labor issues, journalism, and current events. The WPA emphasized adult education programs, which taught classes in vocational training, literacy and citizenry and by December 1936, an estimated 1.5 million adults had enrolled in these courses. In July 1939, the Workers' Education Project was established as a separate program from the WPA. That same year, state and federal officials responded to participants' desire to learn services outside of the classroom by developing the Workers' Service Program (WSP).

The state of Indiana participated in the Workers' Education Project from 1935 to 1939, teaching classes in industrial cities like Indianapolis, Ft. Wayne, Gary, Muncie and Lafayette. The most popular of these classes were literacy education, public speaking, labor problems, economics and African American history. Indiana emphasized training for teachers of WPA participants, sponsoring training sessions at McCormick's Creek State Park and Indiana University. These teachers taught in state institutions like libraries, schools and Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camps. The program made an effort to increase women's participation by offering classes like "Home Art and Everyday Living" and Eleanor Roosevelt visited Muncie WPA officials to promote women's involvement.

Indiana participated in the WSP, which grew rapidly in the state and attracted 20,000 participants. These services were also taught in industrial cities like South Bend and Evansville, but focused on exhibits, research projects and contributions to union newspapers. Muncie automobile industry participants sponsored the Workers' Service Center and helped with library, orchestra, and art projects. Gary participants developed the Gary Traffic School for training and drivers' safety and South Bend WPA education teachers helped establish a credit union for Studebaker employees. In 1940 and 1941, Indiana WPA workers facilitated World War II needs by focusing on the defense industry and civil defense activities. Roosevelt terminated the WPA on 30 June 1943 because of increasing war demands.

Sources:

Hamilton, Donald Eugene. "A History of FERA and WPA Workers' Education: The Indiana Experience, 1933–1943." Ph.D. diss., Ball State University, 1984.

National Archives. *Records of the Work Projects Administration*. Accessed December 15, 2011. <http://www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records/groups/069.html>

Information also gathered from collection photographs.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection contains one box of black and white photographs of WPA activities from various areas in the state, including Ft. Benjamin Harrison, Terre Haute, Vanderburgh County, Bluffton and Indianapolis. Photographs in the first nine folders illustrate the diversity of participants, ranging from children to senior citizens, and reflect a variety of WPA activities, such as adult education, recreation, medical care and the naturalization of foreign-born people. These photographs contain labels identifying each WPA activity and are located on the back of the photograph.

The rest of the collection is divided into two folders; the first contains photographs from the 1938 Democratic National Committee and the second contains unmarked photographs that are likely also from the National Committee. These photographs show WPA exhibits from Indiana and other midwestern states, and present a variety of projects related to the following topics: construction, museum aids, statistics, medical testing, disease control, sewing, Braille, foreign language, Gary's Children's Federal Theatre, Indian art, and social security.

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CONTENTS

Woman studying in adult education literacy class, n.d.

Two boys playing baseball on WPA Recreation
Playground, n.d.

Boys at ping pong table at Bluffton Recreation Center,
n.d.

Child check-up at Nursery School, Indianapolis, 1936

WPA orderly helps injured serviceman at Station
Hospital, Ft. Benjamin Harrison, n.d.

Child at Washington Nursery School, Lafayette, n.d.

Foreign-born citizens taking naturalization oath,
Indianapolis, n.d. (2 images)

Men at desk for Workers' Service Project, Information
Center, Terre Haute, n.d.

Two children eating school lunch in Vanderburgh
County, n.d.

Exhibit, Democratic National Committee, 16-17 May
1938 (16 images)

[Exhibit, Democratic National Committee, 16-17 May
1938] (14 images)

CONTAINER

Photographs,
Box 1, Folder 1

Photographs,
Box 1, Folder 2

Photographs,
Box 1, Folder 3

Photographs,
Box 1, Folder 4

Photographs,
Box 1, Folder 5

Photographs,
Box 1, Folder 6

Photographs,
Box 1, Folder 7

Photographs,
Box 1, Folder 8

Photographs,
Box 1, Folder 9

Photographs,
Box 1, Folder 10

Photographs,
Box 1, Folder 11

CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog:
<http://opac.indianahistory.org/>
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, P 0508).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.