



*The Central Correspondence Files of the
Work Projects Administration (WPA) and its Predecessors,
1933–1944*

The Federal Emergency Relief Act of May 12, 1933, inaugurated President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's "New Deal" program to combat the adverse economic and social effects of the Great Depression. The act created the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), a grant-making agency authorized to distribute \$500 million in Federal aid to the states for relief. In addition to allocating funds for direct relief and work relief projects, FERA issued regulations to maintain minimum relief standards, and coordinated information on relief problems, policies, and procedures. The Civil Works Administration (CWA), established on November 9, 1933, operated under FERA to provide work for 4 million unemployed persons during the winter of 1933–34. On May 6, 1935, the Works Progress (later Work Projects) Administration (WPA) assumed oversight of work relief. The WPA assumed all FERA-related functions, and the Federal Emergency Relief Administration closed in December 1935. The WPA continued to operate until June 1943.

As part of their operations, the WPA and its predecessors maintained central correspondence files. In addition to tracking general relief activities, these files often documented individuals appealing for direct relief, such as farmers, U.S. citizens stranded abroad, and transient World War I veterans, as well as people seeking employment on work projects. The letters often contained personal information, and described the economic circumstances of destitute families.

New Deal central correspondence files are part of Records of the Work Projects Administration (Record Group 69) and are located at the National Archives at College Park, Maryland. The files are described in Preliminary Checklist 37 (PC 37), *Preliminary Checklist of the Central Correspondence Files of the Work Projects Administration and Its Predecessors, 1933–1944*.

Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA)

___ **"Old General Subject" Series, Mar. 1933–Jan. 1935** (PC 37, Entry 8). This correspondence file is arranged alphabetically by subject. Several categories that contain information about individuals include Aliens, Repatriation of; Appeals and Applications; Rural Rehabilitation; and Transients, all of which are arranged alphabetically by correspondent. The records filed under each subject usually include the original correspondence (handwritten and typed), along with an attached carbon copy of the FERA reply or forwarding letter.

___ **"New General Subject" Series, Feb. 1935–1936** (PC 37, Entry 9). Virtually identical to Entry 8, this series is arranged by subjects identified according to a decimal classification scheme. Some of the subject categories carry over from the "Old General Subject" series; other categories are unique to Entry 9. Cross references also exist in the finding aid to link subjects in both series.

RR #417

NATIONAL ARCHIVES *and*
RECORDS ADMINISTRATION

700 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, NW
WASHINGTON, DC 20408-0001

www.archives.gov

___ **“State” Series, Mar. 1933–36** (PC 37, Entry 10). This series of correspondence is arranged alphabetically by states and territories, and then according to a decimal classification scheme. The main classifications include: 400—General Correspondence with State Administrations; 410—Rural Rehabilitation; 420—Transients; 430—Education; 440—Medical Care; 450—Work Relief; and 460—Complaints. Each decimal class contains subclasses of related topics.

Civil Works Administration (CWA)

___ **“State” Series, 1933–34** (PC 37, Entry 1). The correspondence in this series is arranged alphabetically by states and territories, then by subjects arranged either chronologically or alphabetically. The subjects include General Administrative Correspondence (chronological by date of reply with incoming letters attached); Complaints re Administration of Program (alphabetical by name of complainant); Disbursing Officers, Correspondence with (chronological); Projects, Correspondence re (alphabetical by name, location, or type of project); Safety and Compensation (chronological); and Miscellaneous Correspondence (alphabetical by name of correspondent).

___ **“General Subject” Series, Nov. 1933–June 1934** (PC 37, Entry 2). Correspondence in this series is arranged alphabetically by subject similar to Entry 8. Subjects range from Administration, Appeals for Employment, and Applications for Positions, to Invitations, Medical Care, Requests for Information, and Veterans Administration.

Work Projects Administration (WPA)

___ **“General Subject” Series, 1935–44** (PC 37, Entry 11). Similar to Entry 9, this series is arranged according to a decimal classification scheme. The main classifications include: 000—Miscellaneous Correspondence; 100—Administrative Correspondence; 200—General Projects; 300—Federal Departments; and 400—Cooperatives. Subclasses containing potential information about individuals include: 001—Indian Relief; 002—Veterans Bonus; 050—Aliens; and 140—Personnel (of Washington Office). Subclass 050 is further divided into 051—Status of Filipinos, and 052—Citizenship Affidavits.

___ **“State” Series, 1935–44** (PC 37, Entry 12). This series is arranged alphabetically by states and territories and then according to a decimal classification scheme. All correspondence falls under general class 600—Letters to All State Administrators, then subclasses 610—Correspondence with State Administrators; 620—Reports and Accounts; 630—Personnel; 640—Labor Management, and Labor and Employment; 650—Projects (General); 660—Women’s Work Program; and 690—Miscellaneous Correspondence.