

Mr. Roosevelt Comes to Champaign County: An Examination of the New Deal

Fellowship Lesson 2009
Marshall Schacht (St. Joseph-Ogden High School)
Champaign County Historical Archives

Lesson 4.3: Works Progress Administration (WPA)—Rural

“WPA in DeWitt County” Urbana Daily Courier: Aug 1, 1936 ([Part I](#), [Part II](#), [Part III](#))

- Why would WPA money go to cities before going to rural communities?
- The article states that “jobs even in good times have been at a premium”. Why would this be true?
- Why would rural communities like those in DeWitt County be isolated from the rest of the state?
- What impact would this isolation have on lives there (esp. economically)?
- What changes would WPA projects bring? Focus upon the road projects named in Part II.
- What additional programs that modernized life in rural communities are mentioned in Part III?
- Consider the last paragraph:
 - *“This tour of the projects in DeWitt County has revealed some of the more obvious benefits of the WPA program. The less obvious benefits—restored self-respect, pride in ability to work, the proud air of economic sufficiency—are equally as important. And the improvements are permanent.”*
 - Restate the impact of the WPA programs on the attitudes in this rural community.
 - What emotional problems would people have during the depression? How did the WPA address the people’s needs?
 - What is the author’s message in the last sentence?

[“Water Works to Modernize Village”](#) Champaign-Urbana News Gazette: Dec 14, 1941

- How was this \$66,000 project paid for?
- Who would have made the proposal for this project?
- How could something like “water works” modernize the village of St. Joseph?
- What impact would water service have on community development?
- Note the date. Given the history of the New Deal programs, this is late in the game. Why would New Deal programs be slower to reach rural communities?
- Note the date, again. What significant event happened a week prior? What impact would this event have on the future of the WPA?

[“Community Building Nearly Done”](#) Champaign Urbana News Gazette: May 17, 1942 ([photo](#))

- What impact did the community building in Broadlands have for the people living in the community?
- How will it impact the students living in the community?
- Is this a good use of government money?
- Did the WPA pay for the entire project?
- Why did FDR always insist that municipal governments match funds for the completion of projects?
- What former head of the WPA in Champaign County was the chief engineer on this project?
- Given that we were getting deeper into WWII, are you surprised that “life went on” as usual in terms of these projects? What would be the consequences (economic, social and emotional) if it did not?