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Carroll Van West

Middle Tennessee State University, carroll.west@mtsu.edu

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# “THE BEST KIND OF BUILDING”

## THE NEW DEAL LANDSCAPE OF THE NORTHERN PLAINS, 1933-42

CARROLL VAN WEST

“We are definitely in an era of building; the best kind of building—the building of great public projects for the benefit of the public and with the definite objective of building human happiness,” proclaimed President Franklin D. Roosevelt as he introduced his New Deal programs of recovery and reform.<sup>1</sup> From 1933 to 1942 such federal agencies as the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), the Public Works Administration (PWA), the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), and the Works Progress (later Projects) Administration (WPA) gave a new look to the northern plains landscape by placing a federal facade on the public architecture of local communities.<sup>2</sup>

*Carroll Van West is an assistant professor and projects coordinator for the Middle Tennessee State University Center for Historic Preservation and the senior editor of the Tennessee Historical Quarterly.*

Historians in both Montana and North Dakota have quantified the amazing amount of building—from schools to parks to courthouses—completed by New Deal agencies. By the spring of 1940 in Montana, the WPA alone “had built 7239 miles of highway, 1366 bridges, 301 school buildings, 31 outdoor stadiums, 81 athletic fields, 30 swimming pools, 40 skating rinks, 16 golf courses, 10 ski jumps, and more than 10,000 rural privies.” In North Dakota, the numbers were even more staggering. Between 1935 and 1942, the WPA constructed “20,373 miles of highways and streets, 721 new bridges and viaducts, 166 miles of sidewalks, 15,012 culverts, 503 new public buildings, 61 additions to public buildings, 680 outdoor recreational facilities . . . 809 water wells, 2 irrigation projects, 39 sewage treatment plants, and 9 water treatment plants.” The agency also worked with the National Park Service and the North Dakota Historical Society to acquire and develop state parks and historic sites.<sup>3</sup>

These numbers, taken from the standard histories of the states, record only the construction legacy of the Works Progress Administration, a focus shared by most other

histories of the New Deal period. Standard overviews of American architecture, if they even mention the New Deal era, usually speak only of the CCC and the WPA—in fact, the “styles” of the New Deal have been characterized as “WPA Modern” and the “Government Rustic” developed by the CCC and the National Park Service.

The transformation of the northern plains landscape created by the New Deal agencies also involved lesser-known federal agencies that deserve more attention. For example, in North and South Dakota, the Federal Emergency Relief Administration spent more than \$83 million in its two years of existence, much of it work project related. The Public Works Administration doled out almost \$16 million in those two states, and added a whopping \$126 million in Montana, where more than \$110 million went to the massive works project at Fort Peck Dam and Reservoir. The Civil Works Administration threw in another \$18 million in its brief months of existence during the terrible winter of 1933-34. These vast sums also went to schools, parks, public buildings, roads, dams, and many other construction projects in greatly depressed communities.<sup>4</sup>

When these numbers and projects are added to the better-known numbers of the WPA and CCC, the collective impact of the New Deal on the northern plains environment comes into sharper focus. There was not one but two New Deal landscapes: a landscape of relief, most evident in the years 1933-35 and led by agencies created during Roosevelt’s famous “One Hundred Days” of legislative activism, and a landscape of reform, which began with the CCC and PWA in 1933 but hit its stride after the establishment of the WPA during Roosevelt’s “Second New Deal” in 1935.<sup>5</sup>

#### THE LANDSCAPE OF RELIEF

By March 1933 the northern Plains, especially the region between Billings and Bismarck, had been devastated by drought and hard times for almost a decade. The early twen-

tieth-century myth of dry farming, propagated by hopeful agricultural experts, capitalists like James J. Hill of the Great Northern Railway, and a generation of politicians, had almost destroyed the landscape. This region desperately needed jobs and cash. Between 1932 and 1937, the per capita income of North Dakota was a mere 47 percent of the national average, and the number was much lower in the countryside west of the Missouri River. Montana lost six thousand farms during the 1930s, most in the eastern half of the state where entire communities disappeared from the map. In North and South Dakota, 104 of 122 counties suffered from “intense drought distress.”<sup>6</sup>

The PWA, CWA, and FERA were among the first federal initiatives to add new elements to the northern plains landscape. The Public Works Administration was a program of the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933, one of the first New Deal initiatives to attack the depression. The cautious Secretary of Interior Harold Ickes headed the agency; his approach ensured that most construction projects were carefully selected, developed, and controlled by federal officials to make lasting contributions to the public.<sup>7</sup>

The region’s best known PWA project was the Fort Peck Dam in eastern Montana. Administered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers but funded with PWA dollars, the Fort Peck project constitutes the single largest human alteration in the Montana landscape and is an overwhelming example of how the New Deal shaped the environment. Indeed, through Margaret Bourke-White’s later powerful photographs in the initial issue of *Life* magazine, Fort Peck became a national symbol of the New Deal. For those who worked there from 1933 to 1938, “the dam offered a chance to break the individual depression that was breaking the spirits of so many elsewhere in the country.”<sup>8</sup>

The Fort Peck townsite housed the Corps officers and some of the workers who constructed the dam; most lived off-site in shanty towns like Wheeler and “New Deal.” Townsite architecture combined the latest in



FIG. 1. *Fort Peck Theatre (1933-34), Fort Peck, Montana.* Photograph courtesy of the author.

modern prefabrication and the more labor intensive Arts and Crafts styling. For most houses and service buildings, according to an official history, “skilled labor was instructed and became familiar with construction methods of mass production and was assigned to one type of job, going from one building to another, each crew being followed in turn by the crew performing the next operation.” Johnson Drake & Piper of Minneapolis constructed the project’s administration building together with several residences and temporary buildings. The William McDonald Construction Company of St. Louis was a second major contractor along with the C. F. Haglin Company of Minneapolis, which built the majority of worker houses, the town hall, and the theater.<sup>9</sup>

The region’s need for immediate relief demanded that as many as possible of the unemployed should be put to work at Fort Peck. For

architects, planners, and engineers, the issue soon became not how many workers were needed but how many people could be put to some sort of work. Mass-production and standardization of thousands of temporary dwellings was one approach; as more people arrived to work, more were needed to build the basic necessities of shelter, schools, and recreation. As a booklet produced on the project’s fiftieth anniversary put it, “there were 10,000 people here to work on the dam and 10,000 more who lived off the first 10,000.” On the opposite end was the time-consuming craftsmanship involved in the creation of the Arts and Crafts styled public buildings such as the recreation building, the Fort Peck Hotel, and especially the Fort Peck Theater (Fig. 1). Designed by the C. F. Haglin Company, and built by Eugene F. Gilstrap in 1934, the theater is the town’s most significant architectural landmark.

Its excellent craftsmanship includes cut-out balustrades, bracketed eaves, and decorative vergeboard. Its overall Swiss Chalet appearance, however, seems strangely out of place on the flat, treeless prairie of eastern Montana and stands in sharp contrast to the modern yet monumental spillway.<sup>10</sup>

Although most of the PWA money on the northern Plains went to Fort Peck, the agency managed to give other communities new public buildings and facilities. Toole County in Montana received a new courthouse in 1934, as did Hettinger County in North Dakota. Billings, site of the recently established Eastern Montana Normal School, got McMullen Hall, which housed all the normal school administrative and classroom activities during the 1930s, and a new public high school, the Lincoln School. The best nationwide overview of PWA projects (although relatively few northern plains projects were included) is the agency's *America Builds: The Record of PWA* (1939). This institutional study included the Stark County courthouse in Dickinson, North Dakota, the municipal auditorium in Valley City, North Dakota, and from the western edge of the northern plains, the Gallatin County courthouse in Bozeman, Montana, designed by local architect Fred Willson. All reflected various degrees of WPA Modern style.<sup>11</sup>

The Federal Emergency Relief Administration did more than any other federal agency to create a landscape of relief on the northern Plains during the early New Deal. Created in May 1933 and headed by Harry Hopkins, FERA "proved one of the most resourceful and innovative of all New Deal executive agencies," according to historian Robert H. Bremner.<sup>12</sup> The agency gave federal funds to sponsoring state and local agencies, providing labor for all sorts of public projects, initially with little federal direction or supervision. In North Dakota the federal government funded 90 percent of most FERA projects, with local sponsors providing the remainder in cash and materials. This state proved to be a very interesting federal laboratory. Between 1934, when Governor William Langer was charged with

political corruption, and the end of the program in the spring of 1935, FERA officials in Washington "federalized" the agency in North Dakota, coordinating the program with local sponsors and accepting little input or interference from state officials.<sup>13</sup>

FERA affected the northern plains landscape directly with its own programs and with projects from two sub-agencies, the National Recovery Work Relief program and the Civil Works Administration. Active in 42 of 53 counties, the NRWR especially brought relief to drought-stricken counties in western North Dakota. Beginning in October 1933 and lasting for two years, the program provided ranchers with stock feed in exchange for their labor on state highways as well as local farm-to-market roads. In this cooperative venture, FERA provided the manpower from its relief rolls; PWA put up any necessary funding; and engineers W. J. Brophy and J. N. Roherty of the state department of transportation provided supervision and expertise. The National Recovery Work Relief was labor-intensive so as many ranchers as possible could benefit. Sometimes, however, men were ashamed they were being paid to do work with a shovel that one person with a horse and grader could more easily accomplish. When the numbers were tallied, NRWR had graded 258 miles of highway and reshaped another 388 miles. Workers had surfaced 1086 miles with either gravel or scoria and installed more than seven thousand culverts to improve drainage.<sup>14</sup>

The CWA existed for only four months during the winter of 1933-34, but it identified, developed, and approved some five thousand different construction projects throughout North Dakota and put some 37,000 residents to work. From mid-March to 1 April 1934, FERA took over the CWA projects and managed most to completion.<sup>15</sup>

Perhaps the most interesting, yet chilling, projects were the transient camps along two transcontinental railroads, the Northern Pacific and the Soo Line. The two largest were at Bismarck and Bottineau, where "food, clothing, shelter, medical and dental care and hos-

pitalization were available with 24 hour service." The idea of the camps was to "stabilize some of the thousands of men and women trekking annually through the state, particularly during the harvest season." The camps were spartan and military in appearance, isolated from any nearby neighborhoods. The Bismarck camp consisted of long rectangular frame military-like barracks overlooking the Missouri River. The Bottineau camp stood beside Lake Metigoshe. Here the architecture took on a Rustic flavor, with the complex dominated by a 453 foot-long main building of logs with stone chimneys. When hobos or travelers registered, they received medical examinations, were required to take showers, had their clothes fumigated, and were assigned work about the camp or on other nearby FERA projects. Transients from the Bismarck camp, for example, worked on the new state capitol and high school construction projects in exchange for food and shelter. At least six hours of work were required a day, and each transient carried an identification card to be marked when the proper amount of work had been completed. Transients could not receive any food or treatment without their cards, and if they had not performed the day's quota of work (unless excused by the camp doctor), they were "automatically checked out." Architectural historian Gwendolyn Wright has observed that New Deal community planners "were, in general, an idealistic group, interested in creating organic communities among the poor, not just in providing them with shelter." That philosophy clearly did not extend to the transients of the northern Plains.<sup>16</sup>

Not all FERA projects were so prison like. For its work projects, the agency emphasized that its two major objectives were dam construction to attack the drought and highway and street improvement projects to repair the local economic infrastructure. Both were labor-intensive; in fact several dam projects used locally acquired stone not just to achieve a rustic look but also because it took more men and more time to build with stone than it did to construct a concrete structure. Overall,

FERA built 114 new dams in North Dakota, most in the western half of the state, and also dug 34 cooperative wells that ranch families could share. The agency also claimed success with its road-building programs. In addition to the National Recovery Work Relief, FERA constructed or repaired 2300 miles of new highways, roads, and streets, installed or repaired 581 blocks of sidewalks and gutters, repaired sewer systems in small towns, and built 986 sanitary privies.<sup>17</sup>

The landscape of relief represented by FERA, however, involved more than the rural infrastructure for improved water supply and better roads. FERA also observed the blighted rural communities of North Dakota and saw a partial answer in the construction of new recreational facilities and the repair of local school buildings. In its two years of existence, FERA built 14 new pools, 11 playgrounds, 88 tennis courts, 50 baseball diamonds, 32 golf courses, 108 skating rinks, 8 ski jumps, and 4 horse-shoe courts. It also funded 8 new schools and 70 other community buildings, including town halls, libraries, and courthouses. While under federal guidance, FERA in North Dakota also established one of the region's first subsistence homestead projects at Burlington, an old coal mining town west of Minot on the Great Northern Railway's main line. Here on 870 acres divided into seven-acre tracts with house, barn, and chicken house, federal engineers, planners, and architects envisioned a community "designed to provide comfortable and attractive homes, supplementary income and the assurance of a plentiful supply of home produced milk, fruit and vegetables." Agricultural reformers insisted that the "subsistence homestead"—where families could raise food on their seven acres and then work in an industrial setting for cash income—could solve the problems of poor farmers. Thus the agency soon purchased another 480 acres so the miners could establish a cooperative mine and share the profits.<sup>18</sup>

FERA did as much repairing and renovating of buildings and parks as it did creating newly designed landscapes. The agency built eight

schools, but renovated 1604 others. It repaired 400 community buildings compared to the 70 new ones it built. While it added 11 new playgrounds to the state, it improved 68 existing ones. Here we can see that FERA was often a reactive agency that relied on the wishes of its local sponsors in a frantic attempt to provide as much help and relief as possible. In the depth of the depression, few places had the resources or initiative to think of reform, to imagine wholly new schools, community halls, and playgrounds of the latest design principles replacing their older vernacular forms. But they could imagine "fixing up" these places if they had some help; they could sponsor repairs to the local school, town hall, playground, or baseball field.

#### THE LANDSCAPE OF REFORM

The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Works Progress Administration were rarely reactive in this sense. Their mission was to reform the landscape through better conservation, forestry practices, and new buildings that spoke boldly and directly of "the shift of government from neutral arbiter to social welfare activist."<sup>19</sup> They did not react to local plans and the wishes of local sponsors; rather they pursued their own agendas of reform and rehabilitation.

From its very beginning, the CCC was one of the president's pet agencies. The idea of a vast army of young men reclaiming the natural landscape of America appealed greatly to Roosevelt who "wanted conservation and planned land use. On this he never equivocated and compromised only when he had to," concluded historian Paul K. Conkin.<sup>20</sup>

Montana had sixty-one CCC camps during the 1930s, most concentrated in the national forests and parks of the western half of the state, like the Birch Creek CCC Camp in Beaverhead County. The agency, according to the 1939 WPA Guide, built "forest highways for public travel, and forest development roads for use in the care of national forest property,"

as well as hiking trails and campgrounds. The agency also developed a few historic sites like the Lewis and Clark Caverns on the Jefferson River. The landscape of eastern Montana was altered largely by CCC camps expanding and improving irrigation headgates and ditches, with major projects taking place at Huntley and Savage on the Yellowstone River. In North Dakota, the CCC had established twenty-two companies by the beginning of 1936. Here the work differed from the reforestation, road, and trail building efforts in the mountains of Montana. In North Dakota, the CCC stayed busy "constructing dams, clearing parks, planting trees, landscaping public grounds, and doing other types of permanent public works" like planting shelter belts.<sup>21</sup>

The agency also initiated the serious work of historic preservation in the state. Around the Missouri River near Bismarck, the CCC developed the Fort Abraham Lincoln State Park, building the first museum, reconstructing Mandan earthlodges, fort blockhouses, shelters, roads, and paths, and marking the archaeological remains of other significant structures. The park's depiction of history was progressive for its time: as much attention was given to the careful recreation of the On-A-Slant Indian Village (Fig. 2) as it was to the military post at Fort McKean. Fort Abraham Lincoln, most famous for its association with General George Armstrong Custer, was merely marked. The highly touted reconstruction of "Custer's house" is the work of present-day park planners and preservationists; the CCC had enough sense to concentrate its efforts elsewhere.<sup>22</sup>

The agency also made many improvements to the north and south units of the Theodore Roosevelt State Park (now a national park) and the International Peace Garden on the Canadian border. It added migratory refuges at Arrowwood Lake near Edmunds and on the Souris River near Kramer. The camps often began as tent cities and rarely evolved into more than rows of frame barracks, exposed to the elements with little landscaping, a rather



FIG. 2. Reconstructed earthlodge (1934), "On-A-Slant Village," Fort Abraham Lincoln Park, Mandan, North Dakota. Photograph courtesy of the author.

ironic approach to camp development compared to the transformation the agency brought to the regional landscape.<sup>23</sup>

The planning regimentation associated with the CCC partially explains why Government Rustic style, which grew out of park designs based on the natural resources and landscape of the mountain West and the Adirondacks of New York, was often used at northern plains parks, although the exposed beams and rough stone work had, at first glance, little to do with the rolling prairies of the region (Fig. 3). Once the National Park Service published its architectural guides *Park and Recreation Structures* and *Park Structures and Facilities* in 1938, Government Rustic became codified as really the only proper park architecture. Yet, as Phoebe Cutler has recently argued, the close



FIG. 3. Menoken Archeological Site near Bismarck, North Dakota. Photograph courtesy of the author.



relationship to nature—the rising from the ground itself— associated with many Rustic structures had close affinity to the work of master plains architect Frank Lloyd Wright. Although jarring at first sight, the rustic park pavilions still found in large numbers in North and South Dakota, like those at the Fort Clark State Historic Site in North Dakota, were naturalistic reflections of the greater prairie landscape.<sup>24</sup>

Many plains residents recognized that while the Federal Emergency Relief Administration tended to repair and renovate existing projects, the Civilian Conservation Corps was engaged in constructing a new landscape. Even when it undertook “reforestation,” the CCC most often enhanced the natural landscape to the point that it represented something quite different from the past. Some residents cared little for the new landscape of the “government men.” Ann Marie Low of the Stony Brook community in North Dakota watched carefully as a CCC camp transformed her father’s farm into a wildlife refuge. The final result alienated her: “I will not miss [this place] very much. After all the changes the government is making, it isn’t home to me anymore.” Others shared her aversion to the engineered landscape of the New Deal experts.<sup>25</sup>

American Studies scholar Catherine Stark has recently reconstructed the attitudes about and the reactions to the Great Depression in North and South Dakota. The depression proved catastrophic in the region because many residents were tied either directly or indirectly to the farm community. The drought simply destroyed crops, and there was real hunger in the countryside, no matter how hard a family worked. This sapped the emotional strength of many plains communities. A middle-class culture that believed in hard work as a way of life, a cure-all for most social and economic problems, and a source of community strength and identity found its assumptions and attitudes meaningless in face of the almost total failure of the farm economy.<sup>26</sup>

Many northern plains residents found the very different assumptions about work and

relief embodied in the Works Progress Administration especially difficult to accept. The best known agent of the landscape of reform on the northern Plains, and part of Roosevelt’s Second Hundred Days in 1935, the WPA assumed many of the duties and projects of the earlier FERA. Between 1935 and 1939, the agency spent \$86 million in Montana and North Dakota. Its administrator, Harry Hopkins, wanted to expand the earlier relief function of FERA, free it from the dictates of local sponsors, and employ as many people as possible in all sorts of tasks. Therefore, unlike the PWA, officials at the WPA did not always develop well-defined, lasting projects: if more people needed work, then work was “found,” no matter its value. But the lack of local involvement and the “make-work” philosophy soon alienated many northern plains residents. They ridiculed WPA workers and remained suspicious of federal intrusion, wondering if the “government men” really understood the region and its needs.<sup>27</sup>

Despite the incessant criticism, the Works Progress Administration contributed much to the reform of the regional public landscape and the reform of the broken spirit of many northern plains communities. In the hardest hit area of the northern Plains—eastern Montana and western North Dakota—the WPA reinforced devastated rural communities through the construction of new county fairgrounds (like the splendid Art Deco/Moderne fair buildings at Great Falls, Montana), county courthouses, and community halls.

The eastern Montana prairie counties of Sheridan, Roosevelt, Musselshell, and Big Horn received new courthouses from the WPA during the late 1930s. Sheridan (1937) and Roosevelt (1939-40) (Fig. 4) were starkly unadorned examples of WPA Modern massing and design. The Sheridan courthouse was built the same year the local Nonpartisan League newspaper, the *Producers News*, ended nineteen years of publication. Local agrarian radicalism had lost its sense of purpose in the face of New Deal activism. The Musselshell County Courthouse (1939) (Fig. 5) shared a WPA



FIG. 5. *Musselshell County Courthouse (1939), Roundup, Montana.* Photograph courtesy of the author.



FIG. 6. *Big Horn County Courthouse, Hardin, Montana.* Photograph courtesy of the author.

gathering points for those who stayed, recreating in physical terms a sense of shared purpose and togetherness that the depression had shattered. The community and memorial halls were physical statements, in the words of Catherine Stark, of a "place to belong, support, and defend, a place where everyone should be on equal terms and have an equal opportunity to succeed, [and] a place where the common good should come first and ultimately reinforce individual success." This was important in an environment where the individual, compared to the vastness and monotony of the landscape, seemed to account for little and at a time when once stable communities could literally disappear overnight.<sup>30</sup>

For those who cared to grasp it, the new landscape of the WPA and CCC at least offered hope and a sense of a renewed commitment to people of the wind-swept and devastated farmland of the northern Plains. In 1940 two new WPA public buildings in two of the region's largest cities suggested that urban residents of the northern Plains were ready to step into the modern age. The Art Deco styling of the Billings City Hall, designed by local architect Chester Cohagen, spoke to the Yellowstone's resurgence and the recovery that would take place as Billings became a petroleum center in the coming decade. Even more impressively, the Natrona County Courthouse, designed by Wyoming architects Karl Krusmark and Leon Goodrich, tied together the past and future in "a highly imaginative design" as its WPA Modern facade was enhanced with quotations from the frontier past. Despite the problems and limitations, and they were considerable, the federal agencies of relief and reform largely recast the public face of the northern Plains, leaving a legacy that confronts anyone who travels the region today.<sup>31</sup>

## NOTES

1. Cited in frontispiece of Phoebe Cutler, *The Public Landscape of the New Deal* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

2. For overviews on the impact of the New Deal alphabet agencies, see Cutler, *Public Land-*

*scape* (note 1 above); Lois Craig and others, *The Federal Presence: Architecture, Politics, and Symbols in United States Government Building* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1978), pp. 342-403; Richard G. Wilson, introduction to *Architecture under the Public Works Administration, 1933-39*, vol. 1 of *Public Buildings*, ed. C. W. Short and R. Stanley-Brown (1939; rpt. New York: Da Capo Press, 1986), vii-x.

3. Michael P. Malone and others, *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*, rev. ed. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991), pp. 299-300; Elwyn B. Robinson, *History of North Dakota* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), pp. 408-09.

4. Leonard J. Arrington and Don C. Reading, "New Deal Economic Programs in the Northern Tier States, 1933-1939," in *Centennial West: Essays on the Northern Tier States*, ed. William T. Lang (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991), 231-32; see also, Leonard J. Arrington, "The Sagebrush Resurrection: New Deal Expenditures in the Western States, 1933-1939," *Pacific Historical Review* 52 (February 1983): 1-16.

5. This distinction mirrors historical scholarship that has pointed out that in general the First New Deal (the 100 Days period) emphasized relief while the Second New Deal of 1935 emphasized reform. See William E. Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932-1940* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), pp. 41-62, 143-66; for the agencies created in 1933, see Gerald D. Nash, *The Great Depression and World War II: Organizing America, 1933-1945* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), pp. 24-25; Robert H. Bremmer, "The New Deal and Social Welfare," in *Fifty Years Later: The New Deal Evaluated*, ed. Harvard Sitkoff (New York: Knopf, 1985), 70-73.

6. Joseph K. Howard, *Montana: High, Wide, and Handsome* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942), pp. 168-77; Robinson, *North Dakota* (note 3 above), p. 400; Malone, *Montana* (note 3 above), pp. 293-95; Catherine M. Stark, *Main Street in Crisis: The Great Depression and the Old Middle Class on the Northern Plains* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), p. 25; for the region in general, see A. Paul Bonnifield, *The Dust Bowl: Men, Dirt, and Depression* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1979).

7. Leuchtenburg, *Roosevelt and New Deal* (note 5 above), pp. 70-71; Wilson, *Public Buildings* (note 2 above), pp. vii-viii; Nash, *Great Depression* (note 5 above), p. 25.

8. Craig, *Federal Presence* (note 2 above), pp. 350-51; Malone, *Montana* (note 3 above), pp. 300-302; *Life*, 23 November 1936; Gordon Gregory, "Fort Peck Workers Recall Different Era," *Great Falls Tribune*, 2 August 1987, p. 2A.

9. "Fort Peck Multiple Resources National Register of Historic Places Nomination," State

Historic Preservation Office, Helena, Montana; Malone, *Montana* (note 3 above), pp. 300-02; Richard Staudinger and McLelland Smith, *Fort Peck Dam and Reservoir* (Bozeman: privately printed, 1976), pp. 11-12.

10. "Fork Peck—A Half-Century and Holding," Special Issue, *District News* 11 (Summer 1987): 5; *Butte Montana Standard*, 2 August 1987, p. 15; "Fort Peck Theater National Register of Historic Places Nomination," State Historic Preservation Office, Helena; Carroll Van West, *A Traveler's Guide to Montana History* (Helena: Montana Historical Society Press, 1986), pp. 62-63.

11. Author's fieldwork notes, Montana and North Dakota, 1988 and 1993; Craig, *Federal Presence* (note 2 above), p. 347; Carroll Van West, *Images of Billings: A Photographic History* (Billings: Western Heritage Center Press, 1990), p. 51; Public Works Division, *America Builds: The Record of PWA* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1939), pp. 54-55, 101.

12. Bremmer, "New Deal and Social Welfare" (note 5 above), p. 71.

13. Robert P. Wilkins and Wynon Huchette Wilkins, *North Dakota: A Bicentennial History* (New York: Norton, 1977), pp. 117-18; *Relief in Review in North Dakota: Through December 15, 1935* (Bismarck: FERA for North Dakota, 1936), pp. 17, 23; for more on the Langer controversy, see Robinson, *North Dakota* (note 3 above), pp. 409-13; and D. Jerome Tweton and Daniel F. Rylance, *The Years of Despair: North Dakota in the Depression* (Grand Forks: Oxcart Press, 1973).

14. *Relief in Review* (note 13 above), p. 52.

15. For a detailed study of one eastern North Dakota county, see Roger D. Hardaway, "The New Deal at the Local Level: The Civil Works Administration in Grand Forks County, North Dakota," *North Dakota History* 58 (Spring 1991): 20-30.

16. *Relief in Review* (note 13 above), pp. 33-35; Gwendolyn Wright, *Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981), p. 222.

17. *Relief in Review* (note 13 above), pp. 50-52.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 55, 74; Federal Writers' Project, *North Dakota: A Guide to the Northern Prairie State* (Bismarck: State Historical Society of North Dakota, 1938), pp. 274-75. In 1939-40, the federal government created another subsistence homestead project in the region, the Kinsey Flats project, opposite the town of Miles City along the Yellowstone River in Montana. Kinsey mostly housed families that had been moved from their small ranches by an earlier federal recovery program, the "Submarginal Land Purchase Program" of the 1934 Bankhead-Jones Act. So the community destroyed by one New Deal program was later recreated by

another agency. Mary Haughian, compiler, *By the Banks of the Yellowstone* (Terry, Montana: privately printed, 1977), pp. 54-64.

19. Craig, *Federal Presence* (note 2 above), p. 343.

20. Paul K. Conkin, *The New Deal* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1967), p. 47.

21. "Birch Creek CCC Camp National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form," State Historic Preservation Office, Helena, Federal Writers' Project, *Montana: A State Guide Book* (New York: Hastings House, 1939), pp. 23-24; Bureau of Reclamation Records, Boxes 27 and 40, RG 115, National Archives, Washington; Malone, *Montana* (note 3 above), p. 299; *Relief in Review* (note 13 above), pp. 27-29; for the Rocky Mountains in general, see James A. Hanson, "The Civilian Conservation Corps in the Northern Rocky Mountains," (Ph.D. diss., University of Wyoming, 1973). For a national perspective, see John A. Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1967); also see, Cutler, *Public Landscape of New Deal* (note 1 above), especially pp. 77-81.

22. "Fort Abraham Lincoln State Park," pamphlet, State Historical Society of North Dakota; author's field investigation, August 1992; "North Dakota State Historic Sites: An Overview," unpublished document available from State Historical Society of North Dakota. The WPA would continue this work on historic sites, developing, in particular, the Chateau de Mores historic ranch and packing plant site in Medora, North Dakota. Inexplicably, a recent survey of historic preservation on the Great Plains, sponsored by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, said little about the significant contributions of the CCC and WPA to the region's early efforts in historic preservation. Elaine Freed, *Preserving the Great Plains & Rocky Mountains* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992).

23. Kenneth E. Hendrickson, Jr., "Relief for Youth: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Youth Administration in North Dakota," *North Dakota History* 48 (Fall 1981): 18-19; FWP, *North Dakota: A Guide* (note 18 above), pp. 178, 181, 205, 240.

24. Cutler, *Public Landscape of New Deal* (note 1 above), pp. 77-81, 92-93; Laura S. Harrison, *Architecture in the Parks: National Historic Landmark Theme Study* (Washington: National Park Service, 1986), pp. 2-4.

25. Quoted in Stark, *Main Street in Crisis* (note 6 above), p. 96.

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 19-32, 41-62.

27. Bremmer, "New Deal and Social Welfare" (note 5 above), pp. 73-74; Leuchtenburg, *Roosevelt*

and *New Deal* (note 5 above), pp. 125-26; Conkin, *New Deal* (note 20 above), pp. 58-59; Arrington and Reading, "New Deal Economic Programs" (note 4 above), p. 232; Stark, *Main Street in Crisis* (note 6 above), pp. 91-92.

28. Author's fieldwork notes, 1984, 1988, and 1991; *Billings Gazette*, 6 January 1954; Federal Writers' Project, *Montana* (note 21 above), p. 225.

29. I thank historian William C. Pratt for the insightful phrase "cathedrals of the Plains." William C. Pratt, "Comments: Movements of Reform and

the Built Environment," *Architecture and Great Plains Symposium*, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, April 1993.

30. Photographic collections, State Historical Society of North Dakota, Bismarck; author's fieldwork, August 1992; Stark, *Main Street in Crisis* (note 6 above), pp. 39, 62.

31. Chester Cohagen Papers, Western Heritage Center, Billings; Elaine Starr, *Architecture of the Cowboy State, 1849-1940* (Glendo, Wyoming: High Plains Press, 1992), p. 19.