Finding Aid for the Federal Writers' Project
New York State Director's Publications Working Files series.

Finding Aid Publication Date: Apr 1st, 2019

Online Finding Aid Record:
http://iarchives.nysed.gov/xtf/view?docId=ead/findingaids/A0551.xml

Overview of Records

Repository:
New York State Archives

Summary:
This series contains files relating to proposed publications of the New York State Federal Writers' Project (FWP). Included are files of projects undertaken at both statewide and local levels. Publications included travel and tourism guides to New York State and local communities; the New York State Almanac; the New York State Encyclopedia; and publications on such topics as health, wildlife, and agriculture.

Creator:
Federal Writers' Project (N.Y.)

Title:
State Director’s publications working files

Inclusive Dates:
1936-1942

Series Number:
A0551

Arrangement:
Arranged by proposed publication.

**Scope and Contact Note:**

This series contains files relating to proposed publications of the New York State Federal Writers' Project (FWP). Some of these writing projects were published, while others did not progress beyond the research or drafting states. Included are files of projects undertaken at both statewide and local levels. All proposed publications were subject to review by the State Director's office.

Most text for proposed publications was prepared by field workers, working out of district offices. This "field editorial copy" was typed at the district office and a copy forwarded to the State Director's office for review and editing. Most field editorial copy includes a cover sheet giving the following information: author (field worker); title; subject; date; number of words; district number; county; city or town; and "index number" - a subject classification code number used for filling purposes.

Toward the end of the Federal Writers' Project's existence (late 1941, early 1942), many district offices forwarded their work in progress to the State Director's office in Albany as the program was phased out due to the advent of World War II. Some of these files appear in this series, often accompanied by transmittal memoranda.

The records of each type of proposed publication are described below, with their corresponding box numbers.

**New York: A Guide to the Empire State, Boxes 1-26.** The statewide guide, published in 1940, was the major project of the FWP during its first years of operation. The guide contains essays on New York's history, culture, agriculture, industry, arts, and related topics; essays on selected cities; and descriptive driving tours of the state. Most of the working files consist of typed and manuscript drafts of field editorial copy, notes, and occasional pamphlets filed by "index number" in numerical subject ("topic") files. Also included are: working files (drafts of field editorial copy) arranged by subject; drafts of essays on cities; drafts of the entire guide; card bibliography of published source material; and photographic prints proposed as guide illustrations.

**Local and Regional Guides, Boxes 27-36 and Boxes 44-60.** Many guides to counties, cities, villages, towns, and geographical regions were prepared, a few of which were published. The working files for these guides generally contain information on local history, notable persons, historic sites or structures, and other "points of interest." This information is generally in the form of: drafts of field editorial copy; drafts of completed guides; and notes, pamphlets, brochures, and clippings. Some files also include correspondence between the State Director, district superintendents, and field workers concerning guides' contents, progress, and sponsorship.

**New York State Almanac, Boxes 37-39.** A historical and practical almanac was prepared for the years 1940 and 1941. Included in the working files are drafts of the text; a 4" x 6" card index to historical events arranged by subject and month; and field editorial copy arranged by subjects.

Some examples of subjects are: events; wisdom; poetry; interesting facts; firsts; history; and humor.

Health Almanac, Box 39. This small quantity of records consists of a draft text containing information and advice on food, nutrition, hygiene, and health care.

New York State Encyclopedia, Boxes 40-44. This project began in the late 1930's as an effort to collect descriptive information on political subdivisions, man made and natural features, and prominent residents or natives of New York. It was apparently reduced in 1940 or 1941 to a listing or "survey" of New York State place names giving brief information on the derivation of names. Ten different forms ("place names cards" on 5" x 8" printed sheets) were used to collect information on different kinds of places or features (see container list for titles of forms). With minor variations each form contains the following information: name of a community or feature; pronunciation of name; location; historical background; origin of name; other names; date of first settlement (communities); dimensions (features); date form prepared; name of field worker; and references cited.

The series contains three small 3" x 5" card indexes to: towns (name only given); sources of water supply (name, latitude and longitude, and elevation); and mountains (elevation, latitude and longitude, county, town, and map quadrangle name).

There are three varieties of typed 5" x 8" cards, possibly entry cards for the uncompleted encyclopedias. 1. Cards for cities, towns, and villages may give all or some of the following information, often in narrative form: statistics (location, size, population); derivation of name; prior names; topography; soil; transportation routes; products; population breakdown (e.g. native, foreign, American Indian); historical sketch; references cited; and name of field worker. 2. Typed cards for rivers, lakes, mountains, and general subjects include all or some of the following information: location; physical description; history; and name of field worker. 3. Typed biography cards include all or some of the following information: birth and death dates; occupation; narrative biographical sketch; references cited; and name of researcher (occasionally).

Working files for the encyclopedia project include field editorial copy arranged by: county; subject; and author (field worker). Also included is a 3" x 5" card index to published source material arranged by county and subject.

Files relating to the related Survey of New York Place Names consist of: typed draft of the "place names survey"; instructions of field workers; and State Director's correspondence with FWP staff concerning the content and progress of the place names survey.

Turning Wheel and Soil, Box 58. This history of agriculture was apparently prepared by a FWP district office for the Rochester Municipal Museum and/or the Rochester public school system. Records consist of field editorial copy and a draft of the book.

Monroe County Wildlife Study, Box 59. These files contain narrative descriptions of bird species found in Monroe County.

Chemung County Wildlife Study, Box 60. These files contain narrative descriptions of bird species found in Chemung County.

Your Vacation in New York, Box 60. This file contains drafts, notes, and recreational area brochures used to produce a short guide to recreational opportunities in New York.

America Eats, Box 60. This file contains instructions for writers and drafts of text for a nationwide publication series about American eating customs and habits.

**Use of Records:**

**Access Restrictions:**
There are no restrictions regarding access to or use of this material.

**Related Information:**

**Related Materials:**
Series 11891, Working Files for the Historical Album of New York State, and

Series A3272, Biographical History Cards on Prominent New Yorkers, contain related materials of the Federal Writers' Program.

**Access Terms:**

Subjects:

- Local history
- Public service employment
- Historic sites
- Biography
- Almanacs

Corporate Names:

- Federal Writers' Project (N.Y.)
- New York State Archives
- New York (State). Education Department Division of Archives and History
- Federal Writers' Project
- University of the State of New York
- New York (State). Education Department

• United States. Works Progress Administration

Geographic Names:

• New York (State)
• New York (State)--History

Functions:

• Publishing

**Detailed Description:**
Contact repository for copy with container list information.