

## The Depression Overview

The following documents describe events and issues surrounding the Civil Works Administration in St Lawrence County from November 1933 to March 1934. The Civil Works Administration (CWA) was established by EO 6420-B November 1933. US President Franklin D. Roosevelt set up the experimental program in federal work relief to provide the unemployed with public service jobs during the bitter winter of 1933-34 in the depths of the Great Depression.

The first lesson deals with the establishment of the CWA on the national level using articles from the Watertown Daily Times, November 20, 1933. The second lesson uses articles from the Watertown Daily Times, November 28, 1933, to examine the variety of types of work undertaken in St Lawrence County, the numbers of people employed, and the wages they were paid. The final lesson uses DeKalb Town board minutes to examine the types of projects undertaken in one small rural township.

These lessons, can be taught as a series of three or individually.

The Town Board minutes are from the DeKalb Town Clerk's office. The newspaper articles are from the Watertown Daily Times Microfilm collection, St. Lawrence University.

### Suggested Lessons:

Disciplines: Social Studies, and Mathematics

Grade Levels: 5-9

Time Frame: 3 class periods  
(Each lesson in this group could be taught as a stand alone lesson)

Materials Needed:

- Copy of Town Board Minutes p. 269, 274, 275 and 277(provided)
- 2 Newspaper pages (provided)
- 3 Worksheets (provided)

Learning Objectives: The students will:

1. Gather information about the organization of the Civilian Works Administration nationally and locally from Town Board notes and newspaper articles.
2. Gather information about steps to implement CWA projects in the North Country.
3. Calculate weekly wages based on hourly wage information.

4. Calculate the total CWA hours in the town of Potsdam and the percentage reserved for women.
5. Based on Town Board minutes, determine the duration of the CWA program in the township of DeKalb and the types of projects they completed.

Procedures:

**Lesson one**

1. Distribute copies of the worksheet, “The Civil Works Administration”, and the November 20, 1934, Watertown Daily Times articles (Headline “Million Get Jobs on New U.S. Projects”).
2. Have the students read the articles and the introduction at the top of the worksheet.
3. Direct the students to complete the worksheet by analyzing the newspaper articles.
5. Discuss with the class how it would feel to have to sign up for relief payments vs. working for the CWA program.

**Lesson two**

1. Distribute copies of the worksheet ‘CWA in the North Country’, and the Watertown Daily Times page ‘North Country Towns’.
2. Have the students read the documents and answer the questions on the worksheet.
3. Discuss with the students the variety of different projects undertaken by the different towns. Have the students consider whether women in Potsdam got their 10% of the total jobs and discuss why.

**Lesson three**

1. Distribute Town Board Meeting minutes, pages 269, 274, 275, and 277 and worksheet ‘DeKalb and the CWA’.
2. Have the students read the board minutes looking for references to the CWA.
3. Discuss with the students what it would be like to be working on highway projects in St Lawrence County in January and February?
4. Have the students complete the questions and go over the answers together.

Further Research and Discussion of the Great Depression:

Invite a senior citizen to your class to discuss the Great Depression and its effects in your town.

Visit your local public library. Use their microfilm of the local newspapers to do further research about the Depression and your community.

Read a book such as:

Bartoletti, Susan Campbell. *The Christmas Promise*. New York: Blue Sky Press, 2001.

Hanes, Sharon and Richard C. Hanes. *The Great Depression and The New Deal*. Detroit, MI: Gale, 2002.

Norrell, Robert J.. *We Want Jobs! A Story of the Great Depression*. Austin, Texas: Raintree Publications, 1993.

Young, Cybele. *Pa's Harvest*. New York: Greenwood Books, 2000.

#### **NYS Social Studies Standards correlation:**

##### **Standard 1: Key Idea 4**

-Consider different interpretations of key events and /or issues in history and understand the differences in these accounts.

-Explore different experiences, beliefs motives, and traditions of people living in their neighborhoods, communities, and State.

-View historic events through the eyes of those who were there, as shown in their art, writings, music and artifacts.

Intermediate

-Consider the sources of historic documents, narratives, or artifacts and evaluate their reliability

-Describe historic events through the eyes and experiences of those who were there.

##### **Standard 5: Key Idea 4**

-Explain the role that civility plays in promoting effective citizenship in preserving democracy.