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## Review of *Parks for Texas: Enduring Landscapes of the New Deal* by James Wright Steely

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**Parks for Texas: Enduring Landscapes of the New Deal.** James Wright Steely. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999. xxi+274 pp. Tables, photos, notes, references, index. \$29.95 cloth (ISBN 0-292-77734-5).

This excellent study chronicles the growth of the Texas state park system from its beginnings in the 1880s to its maturity in the 1940s. Parks were established at first around historic sites from the Texas Revolution, and not until the 1920s did Governor Pat Neff envision the kind of modern park system that eventually developed. Even then, it was not until the 1930s that the system began to grow rapidly as a result of a federal-state partnership for Depression relief that provided the funds and labor to build fifty-two parks under the direction of the National Park Service.

Most of the parks were developed and built by relief workers employed by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). The latter organization was deeply involved in the park program, and by 1943 its personnel had built or improved thirty-two parks in all areas of the state. On the surface the system appeared to grow smoothly, but in fact a great deal of political maneuvering was involved featuring numerous interesting and often colorful figures such as David E. Colp, Jimmie Allred, Miriam Ferguson, and Conrad Wirth. Steely describes

the activities of these and many other participants in this saga in microscopic detail. Some critics have argued that his effort to tell this story at times becomes mired in minutia, forgetting that details are the essence of reality. The serious student of twentieth-century Texas history and the New Deal welcomes this meticulous approach.

Steely's research is impressively thorough. He has exhausted all the federal, state, and local primary sources, consulted all the relevant secondary sources, and used a number of oral histories based upon the testimony of CCC veterans. The result speaks for itself. It is unlikely that any researcher will need to approach this topic again for a long time to come. **Kenneth E. Hendrickson Jr.**, *Department of History, Midwestern State University, Wichita Falls, Texas.*