

THE CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS AS MEANS  
OF SOCIAL CONTROL: A SOUTHWESTERN  
OKLAHOMA PERSPECTIVE

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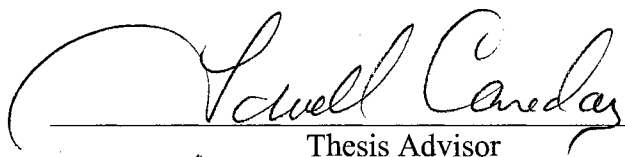
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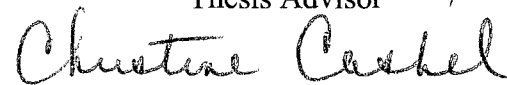
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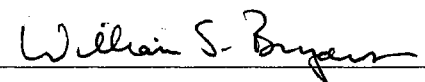
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## PREFACE

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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction, Statement of Thesis and Historical Background

#### Introduction and Statement of Thesis

Both to save a generation of upright and eager young men and to help save and restore our threatened natural resources, I had determined even before Inauguration to take as many of these young men as we could off the city street corners and place them in the woods at healthful employment and sufficient wage so that their families might also be benefited by their employment. (Rosenman, 1938b, p. 82)

Franklin Delano Roosevelt overtly claimed that the function of the newly formed Civilian Conservation Corps work relief program was twofold. The purpose of this dissertation is to determine if, and if so, to what degree and how, the United States government designed and utilized the C.C.C. as a means of social control during the Great Depression.

Social control, as defined by Talcott Parsons and utilized in Dorceta Taylor's (1999) study of the use of Central Park as a model for social control, is an "analysis of the processes that tend to counteract deviant tendencies (p. 422)." Based upon the writings of Parsons and J.P. Gibbs, Taylor states more broadly "social control is an attempt by one or more individuals to manipulate the behavior of others by means other than a chain of command (p. 422)." For the purposes of this dissertation these definitions of social control will be used.



## **Historical Background**

### **The Great Depression**

In order to understand the New Deal work relief programs such as the Civilian Conservation Corps, it is necessary to first examine the economic conditions that led to the need for these agencies. An economic depression can be defined as a failure of aggregate demand or total spending to keep pace with aggregate supply or total productive capacity (Graham & Wander, 1985). What became known as the Great Depression began with the stock market panic of 1929 (Rauch, 1963). It continued through 1941, ending with increasing U.S. economic involvement in World War II. It was the most severe and longest lasting depression in U.S. history (Graham & Wander).

The Great Depression was a time of decreased income and increased business failure. From 1929 to 1932 the total income of Americans fell from eighty-two billion to forty billion dollars. During the same period corporate income fell from eleven billion to two billion dollars. Prior to 1929 approximately 20,000 industrial and commercial ventures failed each year. In 1931 alone, 31,000 businesses failed (Rauch, 1963).

Unemployment rose dramatically in the early years of the depression. From March 1930 to March 1931, American unemployment rose from four million to eight million people (Schlesinger, 1957). Between the November 1932 presidential elections and F.D.R.'s inauguration in March 1933 the American people suffered through the worst of the depression. By 1932, the last full year of the Herbert Hoover presidential administration, the unemployment rate was 29.4 percent of the total labor force. By 1933, the first year of the F.D.R. administration, it had risen to 30.5 percent (Graham &

Wander, 1985). An estimated fifteen million men and women were unable to find jobs. Others struggled to survive with reduced hours and lowered wages. Three million Americans received a subsistence level of public relief (Feis, 1966). Many of these unemployed workers were young. Some lived at home futilely looking for local jobs while countless others took to the road searching for better conditions elsewhere (Holland & Hill, 1974).

### **The Great Depression in Oklahoma**

As bad as conditions were in the nation as a whole, they were worse in Oklahoma. The Southwestern United States suffered more than any other part of the nation after the 1920 economic collapse following the end of the World War I boom. Low oil, beef, and wheat prices led to widespread unemployment and financial insecurity in the region (Baird & Goble, 1994; Gibson, 1981). Many Oklahoma farmers were tenants, moving to a new farm each season (Lowitt, 1984). By the time of the stock market crash in 1929 heralding the Great Depression, Oklahoma had not yet recovered (Baird & Goble; Gibson).

In addition to the general economic depression, several factors merged to increase misery in western Oklahoma. Falling farm commodity prices, abundant rainfall, and new agricultural technology all contributed to ill-advised farming practices during the “great plow-up” of the 1920s. Paul Bonnifield states:

The primary cause of the great plow-up was the mechanization revolution of high plains agriculture during the 1920's. The development of the tractor, the combine, the one-way plow, and the truck made the great plow-up possible and determined what crops were planted. (1979, p. 49)

During the “great plow-up” farmers in western Oklahoma turned under thousands of additional acres of native grasses to create wheat fields of marginal quality (Baird & Goble, 1994; Kerr, 1960). Many farmers resorted to plowing hills for additional wheat acreage (Kerr). Richard Lowitt claims that over one-half of all erosion in the United States during the Great Depression period occurred in the Great Plains as a result of this imprudently increased wheat acreage (1984). Widely accepted “scientific dry land farming” techniques such as summer fallowing, “dragging” after rains, and “dust mulching” fields provided little protection against wind and water erosion (Bonnifield, 1979, pp. 40-42).

The spring of 1931 ushered in a serious drought to western Oklahoma. It was to last through 1938. By the summer of 1933, dust storms began and became commonplace for the next five years (Baird & Goble, 1994; Kerr, 1960; Lowitt, 1984; Rauch, 1963).

Lowitt writes:

Throughout the region people and animals had difficulty breathing when the hot winds blew. Housewives taped windows to keep windblown soil from entering their houses. They did not succeed because the soil was sifted so fine by the wind. People got lost in these storms; trains, struggling through, were always several hours late. At times the wind whipped the topsoil into great drifts which settled over hundreds of miles. Minor streams disappeared and major ones...became hardly more than a creek. Noon was like night; visibility was diminished, and if the dust became mixed with moisture, a plaster would attach itself to buildings, cars, streets, and people unfortunate enough to be caught in one of these black blizzards. (p. 57)

With no crops or grasses to hold the soil in place, many farms lost between 2 to 12 inches of soil. Millions of acres throughout the southern plains were heavily damaged. Many farms were covered with sand dunes (Baird & Goble; Kerr). The Secretary of Agriculture, Henry A. Wallace, believed that rehabilitation of the Dust Bowl area would take a decade. He envisioned a corrective program involving the planting of tree belts, grasses, and cover crops, the creation of small reservoirs, and the implementation of terracing (Lowitt).

By 1935 many of the residents of the “Dust Bowl” (Bonnifield, 1979, p. 74) began to succumb to a variety of strange illnesses. Outbreaks of strep throat, measles, bronchial diseases, and a respiratory illness known as dust pneumonia were widespread. Shootings, suicides, beatings, bootlegging, and robbery were all too common as well (Bonnifield; Henderson, 1968; Lowitt, 1984).

This brutal combination of factors contributed to an exodus from the state. Between the 1930 and 1940 censuses the population of Oklahoma dropped by 60,000. Many of these “Okies” (Lowitt, 1984, p. 179) left their farms in Oklahoma in hope of finding work in the western United States. Upon arrival in California, the Okies commonly found unfriendly and even openly hostile native attitudes. The plight of these Oklahomans was immortalized in John Steinbeck’s 1939 novel, *The Grapes of Wrath* (Baird & Goble, 1994; Lowitt).

### **Hoover’s Response to the Great Depression**

The thirty-first president of the United States, Herbert Hoover, appeared to be extremely qualified for the job of depression relief. During the dark days of the World War I era Hoover served in a variety of key relief administrative posts. He served as

Head of the Commission for Relief of Belgium from 1914-1919 and as United States War Food Administrator after U.S. entry into the European conflict (Chambers, 1965; Graham & Wander, 1985; Schlesinger, 1957). After the armistice Hoover served as Director General of the postwar American Relief Administration. In addition to these qualifications, he served as Secretary of Commerce and was generally acknowledged as a successful businessman, engineer, investor, and humanitarian (Chambers; Graham & Wander).

The first year of the Hoover administration, 1929, witnessed the onset of the Great Depression following the October stock market crash. Hoover's initial response to the worsening depression revolved around his feeling that he should do nothing that would change the fundamentals of the American way of life. This meant limiting federal intervention. At this time in history, poor relief was considered a problem best handled at the state and primarily the local levels of government. Most relief came from local governments and charitable organizations and was mainly given in the form of food and clothing (Chambers, 1965; Williams, 1968). As unemployment continued to increase, many of these local agencies found that the relief problem was too large to handle (Schlesinger, 1957).

Hoover believed that among the primary causes of the depression were economic and political problems in Europe. He thought that the depression had little to do with the structure of the American economy. These beliefs guided the steps he took to mitigate the crisis. Amidst controversy, he opposed the cancellation of Allied World War One debts. In order to counteract the ill effects of the depression the President strove to reduce government spending. He stated "the first necessity of this nation, the wealth and

income of whose citizens have been reduced, is to reduce expenses of government-national, state, and local” (Feis, 1966, p. 7). Hoover insisted on the maintenance of a balanced federal budget and the retention of the gold standard (Feis).

Through a series of “bullish public statements” (Feis, 1966, p. 5) Hoover worked to reassure the American people and stimulate business leaders. The President believed that if business and finance leaders’ fears could be dispelled that economic recovery and prosperity would inevitably follow (Feis). Schlesinger (1957) states that since Hoover believed there was nothing wrong with the conditions, he also believed there could “be nothing basically wrong with the mechanism”. For Hoover, according to Schlesinger, the depression was a problem of psychology not economics. As Hoover’s bullish pep talks failed to correct the problem, he began to look for other “stimulants.”

“What this country needs...is a good big laugh. There seems to be a condition of hysteria. If someone could get a joke off every ten days, I think our troubles would be over”...in 1932 he asked Will Rogers to think up a joke that would stop hoarding. To Rudy Vallee, the crooner, he said, “If you can sing a song that would make people forget their troubles and the Depression, I’ll give you a medal.” And to Christopher Morley: “Perhaps what this country needs is a great poem....I keep looking for it, but I don’t see it. Sometimes a great poem can do more than legislation.” (p. 242)

Later in his administration as economic conditions continued to deteriorate, Hoover initiated a limited program of public works and began the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (R.F.C.). Begun in 1932 the R.F.C. was designed to make loans to financial institutions, insurance companies and railroads (Rauch, 1963). However, by the early

1930s Hoover's "gloom and insecurity" was felt throughout the nation. The word "Hoover" soon came to widespread derogatory use. Schlesinger writes:

The very word "Hoover" became a prefix charged with hate: not only "Hooverilles," but "Hoover blankets" (newspapers wrapped around for warmth), "Hoover wagons" (broken-down automobiles hauled by mules), "Hoover flags" (empty pockets turned inside out), "Hoover hogs" (jackrabbits). (1957, p. 245)

The American public's negative perceptions of the Hoover administration's attitudes and policies led to his resounding defeat in the presidential election of 1932 after one term in office (Feis, 1966).

### **Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the New Deal**

"I pledge you, I pledge myself, to a new deal for the American people" (Rosenman, 1938a, p. 659). With these words Franklin Delano Roosevelt provided a bright ray of hope during one of America's darkest hours. Within days of his inauguration as the thirty-second president of the United States, F.D.R. pushed through legislation creating sweeping changes in the federal government's poverty relief role (Ickes, 1953; Sherwood, 1948; Wirth, 1980). F.D.R. took office in March 1933 during a serious banking crisis (Schlesinger, 1957). The nation-wide sense of panic caused by this crisis assisted the president in passing a flurry of fifteen major new laws during his first one hundred days in office. This remarkable collection of legislation created the New Deal (Graham & Wander, 1985; Schlesinger, 1959).

The New Deal was F.D.R.'s response to the Great Depression. Roosevelt's New Deal was an expansion of relief efforts begun in New York after his reelection to a second term as Governor in 1930. This "minor New Deal" involved a slow increase in

public works at the state level. In 1931 he created the Temporary Emergency Relief Administration. Harry Hopkins, a former New York City social worker who would later administer the Federal Emergency Relief Administration and the Works Progress Administration for the Roosevelt presidential administration, directed the T.E.R.A. The T.E.R.A. had, by the 1932 presidential election, distributed more than twenty-five million dollars in the relief of 10 percent of the population of New York. When possible, Roosevelt tried to administer the funds as work relief (Conkin, 1967; Schlesinger, 1957). Roosevelt also put the unemployed to work in conservation projects. Beginning in 1931 these temporary workers set up work camps, planted trees, staffed state tree nurseries, and worked toward “reclaiming the land” in natural settings throughout New York. Impressed with the success of the program F.D.R. planned to expand it to a ten-year undertaking designed to reforest marginal New York lands (Otis, Honey, Hogg, & Lakin, 1986; Saalberg, 1962; Schlesinger, 1957).

As President, Roosevelt initially intended the New Deal to accomplish three major goals. The first was unemployment and poverty relief. In March 1933 this was the most urgent due to record high levels of unemployment. The second goal was economic recovery. Economic and social reform was the third goal. The three goals maintained this order of priority from 1933-1935. Historian Basil Rauch refers to this period as the first New Deal. As economic conditions and unemployment rates recovered, economic recovery fell to third priority behind economic and social reform. This period, beginning in 1935, is known as the second New Deal (1963).

This storm of New Deal legislation led to the creation of a vast array of work relief agencies designed to alleviate the United States’ widespread economic and social



problems by putting the unemployed back to work and pumping money back into the strained economy (Schlesinger, 1958; Sherwood, 1948). Several of these work relief programs such as the Federal Emergency Relief Agency (F.E.R.A.), the Civil Works Administration (C.W.A.), the Works Progress Administration / Work Projects Administration (W.P.A.), the Public Works Administration (P.W.A.), the National Youth Administration (N.Y.A.), and the Civilian Conservation Corps (C.C.C.) contributed to an ever-expanding assortment of public works including roads, schools, public buildings, dams, drainage systems, and parks and recreation areas and facilities throughout the nation (Schlesinger, 1958; Wirth, 1980; Work Projects Administration, 1941).

### **Theoretical Background**

Some theorists argue that during times of great economic and social turmoil, governmental bodies promote the development of ambitious park development projects (Germic, 2001; Taylor, 1999). Stephen Germic contends that Central Park, Yellowstone National Park, and Yosemite National Park all reached completion as a direct result of governmental intervention during times of social instability. Germic asserts that the possible mitigation or resolution of serious social and economic crises drove these nineteenth-century governmental interventions. Germic states that these three nineteenth-century American parks

Were related essentially not so much as preserves of “nature”- which was their rhetorical justification – but as instruments deployed to control contested space, constitute a stable class and national identity, and to assure the reproduction of the dominant social order during times of profound crises, when capital overaccumulation precipitated major economic depressions that led to widespread

worker radicalization and class conflict, in turn profoundly threatening national (capitalist) unity. America's first parks were at once, to some degree, produced by and productive of the panics which occurred so near their respective founding moments. Produced amid crises, the parks were also created to preempt class warfare and obscure class difference... (p. 1)

Germic (2001) writes that the drastic economic downturn known as the Panic of 1857 generated renewed interest in the completion of Central Park in New York City. Yellowstone National Park, according to Germic, had a role in the resolution and obfuscation of yet another serious American economic and social crisis. He claims that the federal government created Yellowstone National Park in 1872 as a response to early economic indicators of the Panic of 1873. Frederick Law Olmsted's role in the development of Yosemite National Park, Germic asserts, involved the obscuring of class difference as well as spatial devaluation. As manager of the Mariposa Estate adjacent to the Yosemite Valley, Olmsted saw the formation of the park as a means of resolving the crisis between the estate owners and the Miwok tribe. Germic goes on to claim that the primary purpose of parks in nineteenth-century America was "economic and political" (p. 2). His definition of political refers to "the discourse and activities of creating and maintaining a national consensus on certain decisive matters" (p. 2). This consensus, according to Germic, served to avert urban rebellion. With the European revolutions of 1848 fresh in the memories of political leaders, the creation and utilization of parks provided an effective means of maintaining this critical national consensus.

Several theorists claim that the Civilian Conservation Corps served a similar function during the Great Depression of the twentieth century. Even so, there are

relatively few pieces of research dealing with the C.C.C. as a means of social control. German academic Olaf Stieglitz is perhaps the most prolific on the subject. He states that the C.C.C. was primarily designed to socialize enrollees as ideal American male citizens (1997). Stieglitz also claims that the C.C.C. was designed to instill a sense of duty and responsibility in the enrollees' generation (1999) as well as promote a utopian society (2001). Political scientist Eric Gorham's (1992) theories are closely related and form the foundation of Stieglitz's research. Gorham claims that the C.C.C. used behavioral control and discipline techniques taken from schools, prisons, and the military to contribute to "the normalization" of enrollees. He stresses the C.C.C.'s intent to render docile and depersonalize the enrollee in order to facilitate his improvement in terms of utility and obedience.

John Pandiani (1982) argues that the C.C.C. functioned intentionally as a mechanism for the reduction of crime rates among young men during the Great Depression. Maria Montoya (1995) claims that the C.C.C. educational offerings promoted the creation of "model American' citizens" (p. 25). Similarly, John Salmond (1967) states that the primary goal of the C.C.C. became the making of good citizens.

This dissertation will approach the notion of the C.C.C. as a means of social control from several perspectives. Examples of social control intent, or the demonstrated lack thereof, will be presented from the papers and writings of many individuals central to the formation and administration of the C.C.C. These will include F.D.R.; New Deal-era Secretary of the Interior, Harold Ickes; Department of the Interior representative to the C.C.C. advisory council and National Park Service Director of State Park Planning,

Conrad Wirth; first C.C.C. Director, Robert Fechner; second and final C.C.C. director, James McEntee; and C.C.C. First Corps Area Educational Adviser, Kenneth Holland.

Specific instances illustrating the presence or absence of social control intent from the three Southwestern Oklahoma C.C.C. project histories explored in Chapters Three through Five will be presented as well. These three chapters relate the histories of three distinct types of C.C.C. camps supervised by three separate technical agencies. Chapter Three tells the story of C.C.C. involvement in the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. Beginning in 1933 the C.C.C. began improving the areas and facilities in the Refuge under the supervision of the U.S.D.A., Bureau of Biological Survey. Operating until 1942, at times up to three camps were stationed in the Wichita Mountains. They included: C.C.C. Company 870, Elm Island; C.C.C. Company 812, Buffalo Springs; and C.C.C. Company 859, Panther Creek. Chapter Four relates the history of C.C.C. Company 2810, Camp SP-16, Lugert, Oklahoma. Under the supervision of the United States Department of Interior, N.P.S. Division of State Park Planning, this company developed Quartz Mountain State Park. Chapter Five involves C.C.C. Company 2826, Camp Church, Clinton, Oklahoma. The Clinton camp performed soil conservation duties primarily on privately owned farms under the supervision of the United States Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service.

Through the use of local camp histories the story of the C.C.C. will be more readily understandable and immediate. Many historians promote the use of local histories. Alfred Andrea and Stuart Sprague state:

Local history has an immediacy that national history lacks. We can see it and interview local people about it. For example, when we view the 1930s from the

local level, the New Deal becomes human, concrete, and understandable, no longer just a bunch of forgettable statistics - billions in expenditure, millions of unemployed. (1993, p. 814)

The C.C.C. lends itself well to local study. Many historians have studied the C.C.C. on a local or state level (Ahlgren, 1988; Austin, 1983; Clancy, 1997; Harr, 1992; Hendrickson, 1976, 1980, 2003; Montoya, 1995; Olsen, 1994; Steely, 1999; Steely & Monticone, 1986; Stetson, 1978; Utley & Steely, 1998; Waller, 2001). Several authors have researched the C.C.C. in Oklahoma. Carolyn Hanneman studied the C.C.C. Indian Division in Oklahoma (2000). Susanne Schrems researched the role of the C.C.C. in the general development of Oklahoma State Parks (1995). However, the only previous researcher to engage in intensive local study of the C.C.C. in Oklahoma is Reid A. Holland. His unpublished Master's Thesis describes the histories of five Oklahoma C.C.C. camps including: Blackwell, Fort Sill, Stapp, Sulphur, and Tulsa (1969). In *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* Holland relates the activities of the C.C.C. in Oklahoma City and Tulsa (1975).

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## CHAPTER II

### The Historical Background and Organizational Structure of the Civilian Conservation Corps

#### F.D.R. and the Creation of the Civilian Conservation Corps

The story of the Civilian Conservation Corps begins before F.D.R.'s 1933 presidential inauguration. F.D.R. stated:

Both to save a generation of upright and eager young men and to help save and restore our threatened natural resources, I had determined even before Inauguration to take as many of these young men as we could off the city street corners and place them in the woods at healthful employment and sufficient wage so that their families might also be benefited by their employment. (Rosenman, 1938, p. 82)

F.D.R. saw the C.C.C. as a means of saving two wasted American resources, the young men and the land (Holland & Hill, 1974; Roosevelt, 1934; Rosenman, 1938; Salmond, 1967; Schlesinger, 1958). Conservation of American youth and land was a topic of great importance to F.D.R. The First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt, recalls that for years preceding his presidency her husband spoke in "desultory" terms of the value of outdoor knowledge and work for young men. She claims that F.D.R. had further desired to create a school combining "manual and intellectual exercise" at Hyde Park (1949, p. 135). Like Thomas Jefferson, F.D.R. believed that a rural life was the ideal. According to Salmond, F.D.R. held that "nothing benefited the soul, mind, and body more than a life lived close to

nature” (p. 6). Eleanor believed F.D.R. conceived the C.C.C. with these thoughts in mind.

F.D.R. had long cultivated a love of the land (Saalberg, 1962; Salmond, 1967; Schlesinger, 1957). Saalberg claims that from his earliest years, F.D.R. enjoyed his life in the natural setting of the Hudson Valley. A participant in a variety of outdoor pursuits, F.D.R. “grew to manhood in the genteel rural environment...where hunting and fishing were commonplace” (p. 4). Speaking of this idyllic childhood, Schlesinger wrote

During the fall and winter he fished, hunted, skated, built rafts, dug snow tunnels. In summer, the family fled the stifling heat which came down over the Hudson, generally to Campobello, an island off the New Brunswick coast, where the boy learned to handle boats in blue water. (1957, p. 319)

An avid ornithologist and naturalist, he took a strong interest in the management of his family lands (Saalberg).

Salmond writes that this love of the land “was both passionate and total” (1967, p. 6). In 1910, immediately after entering public life, F.D.R. began his fight to promote conservation of natural resources. Schlesinger claims this as F.D.R.’s primary theme in his emerging political philosophy (1957). One of his major efforts as a young New York State Senator was the unsuccessful attempt to implement a statewide reforestation plan. In 1920, conservation became a key component of his failed attempt for the U.S. Vice-Presidential nomination (Salmond; Schlesinger, 1957). Elected Governor of New York in 1928, his 1931 forestry work relief projects were his first attempt to combine work relief and conservation (Saalberg, 1962; Salmond; Schlesinger, 1957). Saalberg states F.D.R.’s deep love of the land continued throughout his life. “An interest instilled at

birth had developed into a major concern. It remained such until Roosevelt's death" (p. 5).

Historians commonly claim that a variety of individuals influenced F.D.R.'s conception of the C.C.C. Saalberg states that F.D.R.'s notions of the C.C.C. came from a "blending" of personal thoughts with those of "numerous acquaintances and confidants" (1962, p. 4). The earliest of these influential national figures was his deeply admired fifth cousin, and early conservationist Theodore Roosevelt (Schlesinger, 1957). Perhaps one of Theodore's greatest contributions to F.D.R.'s emerging conservation philosophy was his close friendship with Gifford Pinchot. Much of F.D.R.'s land conservation philosophy stemmed from his early association with Pinchot. F.D.R., "a long-time disciple" (Schlesinger, 1957) of Pinchot, highly respected his conservation views (Salmond). Pinchot, considered the leader of the American conservation movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, equated conservation with wise use of the land. An American born and European trained forester, Pinchot adhered to the conservation movement's multiple use ethic described by Steve Dennis as seeking "to provide...the greatest good for the greatest number for the longest time" (2001, p. 41). In keeping with this ethic, Pinchot, a "scientific forester,"(Dennis, p. 41) was a proponent of "sustained yield" management of renewable resources (Cutter, Renwick, & Renwick, 1991, p. 35; Dennis; Pinchot, 1947).

Pinchot, appointed by Theodore Roosevelt as the first "chief" (Dennis, 2001, p. 42) of the United States Forest Service, later served two nonconsecutive terms as Governor of Pennsylvania. He worked with F.D.R. on conservation issues decades before the C.C.C. era (Dennis; Nixon, 1957; Otis, Honey, Hogg, & Lakin, 1986; Pinchot,

1947; Saalberg, 1962). In 1912 while serving as a New York State Senator and Chairman of the New York Forest, Fish and Game Committee, F.D.R. collaborated with Pinchot on legislation to protect the Adirondack Forests (Nixon; Saalberg; Salmond, 1967). Pinchot's dramatics in the New York State Senate made a lasting impression on F.D.R.

(F.D.R.) invited Gifford Pinchot...to come to Albany for a lecture in the Assembly Chamber. Pinchot threw two pictures on the screen. One was an old Chinese painting, showing a green valley in the year 1500, in a corner of which could be dimly discerned a logging chute. The other was a photograph of the same valley four centuries later, parched and deserted, the bare rocks reflecting the glare of the sun. This disaster was the result, Pinchot suggested, of the greed for profit through logging. It was this lesson Roosevelt hoped to imprint on the state of New York. (Schlesinger, 1957, p. 335)

In the ensuing years the pair corresponded and met regularly (Ickes, 1953; Ickes, 1954a; Ickes, 1954b; Nixon, 1957; Salmond, 1967). The two maintained generally friendly relations with the exception of a brief period of political dissent in the mid-1930s after the start of the C.C.C. program (Ickes, 1954a). F.D.R. and Pinchot spent much time in conversation concerning forestry issues immediately prior to the formation of the C.C.C. The pair corresponded regularly on C.C.C. related topics. Pinchot described the work related needs and possible C.C.C. project areas on U.S.F.S. lands to F.D.R. in great detail (Nixon). In a personal letter dated one month prior to the 1933 inauguration, Roosevelt thanked Pinchot for his input and commented "those forest figures of yours are exceedingly interesting and fit in with just what I need in preparation for the drive for

putting people to work” (Nixon, p. 134). In addition to Pinchot, F.D.R. discussed his plan for the C.C.C. with other influential foresters including Nelson Brown, a professor of Forestry at New York State College, and Major Robert Stuart, chief forester of the U.S. Forest Service (Salmond; Schlesinger, 1958).

Many authors contend that F.D.R.’s plan for the C.C.C. was influenced by a variety of other sources. Historian John Saalberg (1962) claims that although F.D.R. denied the connection, he was possibly influenced by the William James (1906) essay entitled *The Moral Equivalent of War*. Second Director of the C.C.C., James McEntee, makes a similar claim. “Perhaps Franklin Roosevelt remembered, subconsciously at least, the ideas of his former professor at Harvard, William James” (1940, p. 8). A well-known Harvard philosopher, James believed that man should expend his naturally occurring warlike tendencies in the battle of nature rather than his fellow man. In terms similar to those espoused by F.D.R. he advocated the conscription of America’s youth with the purpose of engaging in work beneficial both to the land and the young men (James; Salmond, 1967).

While minimizing the contribution of James’s work on the founding of the C.C.C., Salmond (1967) mentions a more nefarious source of inspiration. He contends that Roosevelt, while actively denying the connection, was potentially influenced by the contemporary actions of several European countries, particularly late Weimar and Nazi Germany. He writes:

By 1932 the governments of Bulgaria, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Austria, and above all, Germany, had established conservation camps for the unemployed. The German Labor Service was to become by far the best



known of these and the one most easily comparable to the CCC. Under Adolf Hitler, the Labor Service...had a distinctive militaristic and authoritarian flavor. It developed into a vehicle for Nazi propaganda, and because of this Roosevelt always denied that it had ever influenced his thinking on the CCC. The two bodies, in his view, simply could not be compared. (p. 5)

Even after taking F.D.R.'s denials at face value, the similarities between the C.C.C. and the German Labor Service are many. The German Weimar Republic founded their camps in 1931 in response to the needs to curb high unemployment rates among the youth, and to undertake practical conservation work. The language parallels Roosevelt's claims justifying the need for the C.C.C. Like the C.C.C., enlistments in the German Labor Service were voluntary terms six months in length. And finally, as in the C.C.C., the boys received token wages in exchange for their work (Salmond).

Some authors claim F.D.R. was influenced by the success of U.S.F.S. camps on the west coast. In Washington and California work relief projects in forest areas were undertaken before Roosevelt's inauguration. The U.S.F.S. provided shelter and work supervision for these unemployed young men. Local and county governments provided clothing, food, and pay. At the time of F.D.R.'s inauguration similar programs were receiving consideration throughout the nation and without doubt they influenced his conceptualization of the C.C.C. (Otis et al., 1986; Saalberg, 1962; Salmond, 1967).

Even though many individuals and entities potentially contributed to F.D.R.'s conception of the C.C.C., it ultimately bore his personal signature. Salmond writes:

Though one can indeed find a wide variety of possible sources for the idea of the CCC, it nevertheless remains true that more than any other New Deal agency it

bore the personal stamp of President Roosevelt. Without him, relief work in the woods may have remained only an idea. (1967, p. 6)

Eleanor Roosevelt concurs. She believed that F.D.R. took great personal pleasure in the creation of the C.C.C. She writes:

As I look back over the actual measures which were undertaken in this first year, I realize that the one in which my husband took the greatest pleasure was the establishment on April 5, 1933 of the Civilian Conservation Corps camps. (1949, p. 135)

### **The Civilian Conservation Corps is Created**

On March 14, 1933, after gaining control of the banking crisis, F.D.R. turned his attention to the legislative creation of the C.C.C. To Brain Trust member Raymond Moley he stated, "I think I'll go ahead on this...the way I did on beer" (Salmond, 1967, p. 10; Schlesinger, 1958, p. 337). Roosevelt intended to request action on the C.C.C. program from Congress immediately. Moley intervened and asked for time to allow the cabinet and congressional members to place the C.C.C. in a broader relief program. Persuaded to slow his pace, F.D.R. sent a memorandum to the cabinet secretaries who would eventually play important roles in the operations of the C.C.C. They included the Secretary of War, the Secretary of Interior, the Secretary of Agriculture, and the Secretary of Labor. The President requested that the group meet to discuss plans for the proposed C.C.C. Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes was named as the contact person for suggestions of possible public works to be engaged in by the C.C.C. (Saalberg, 1962; Salmond; Ickes, 1953).

Even though the C.C.C. held great appeal to F.D.R., other pressing presidential matters precluded his complete involvement in its formation. The problems of organization and administration of the Corps fell to others. The President, “occupied with a hundred other problems,” charged his secretary Colonel Louis M. Howe with working out the mechanics (Schlesinger, 1958, p. 337). Howe, a close friend of the President, had served as his political adviser since F.D.R.’s days in the New York State Senate (Wirth, 1980). Eleanor Roosevelt claims, “Franklin did not have time to do it [organize the administrative structure of the C.C.C.] himself and left it to other people who found the problem of divided authority difficult to solve” (1949, p. 135).

At F.D.R.’s request the four cabinet secretaries met on March 15. At the meeting the secretaries drafted a memorandum to F.D.R. The memo declared that they viewed the C.C.C. as a “self-contained agency” (Salmond, 1967, p. 11). They also termed the C.C.C. a key part of the program to reduce industrial unemployment. The group advised the president to limit the work of the C.C.C. to projects that would not be undertaken normally during a period of economic depression. The secretaries further specified that this work should take the form of soil erosion and forestry projects (Ickes, 1953; Salmond). Evidently concurring with the secretaries’ recommendations, F.D.R. voiced similar thoughts during a press conference the same day. He briefly explained the proposed work of the C.C.C. to the gathered reporters.

The idea is to put people to work in the national forests and on other Government and State properties on work which would not otherwise be done; in other words, work that does not conflict with existing so-called public works. (Rosenman, 1938, p. 68)

In a message to Congress on March 21 F.D.R. formally requested the creation of the C.C.C.:

I propose to create a civilian conservation corps to be used in simple work, not interfering with normal employment, and confining itself to forestry, the prevention of soil erosion, flood control and similar projects. I call your attention to the fact that this type of work is of definite, practical value, not only through the prevention of great present financial loss, but also as a means of creating future national wealth. (Rosenman, 1938, pp. 80-81)

The message shed light on the president's plan for the coordination of the C.C.C. work projects. He stated the, "control and direction of such work can be carried on by existing machinery of the departments of Labor, Agriculture, War and Interior" (Rosenman, p. 81).

Events in the life of the C.C.C. began to move quickly. In his address to Congress F.D.R. claimed that if approval of the bill came within two weeks that 250,000 men would be at work in the C.C.C. by early summer (Rosenman, 1938, p. 81). At a March 29 press conference Roosevelt stated that within two weeks of the passage of the bill the first young men would be enrolled (Rosenman, p. 96). These deadlines produced a flurry of activity in the departments of War, Labor, Interior, and Agriculture. The respective secretaries and their subordinates scrambled to meet the demands of the president (Saalberg, 1962; Salmond, 1967; Wirth, 1980).

Congress responded quickly to the president's call for action. On March 31, five days after F.D.R.'s address, Congress passed the act to create the C.C.C. (Holland & Hill, 1974; Saalberg, 1962; Salmond, 1967; Wirth, 1980). The act, designated Public No.

5, 73d Congress, An Act For the Relief of Unemployment Through the Performance of Useful Public Work and For Other Purposes, contained much of the language developed by the president and his secretaries. The act defined acceptable forms of C.C.C. work projects. It further designated acceptable sites for such work. The act states:

For the purpose of relieving the acute condition of widespread distress and unemployment now existing in the United States, and in order to provide for the restoration of the country's depleted natural resources and the advancement of an orderly program of useful public works, the President is authorized, under such rules and regulations as he may prescribe and by utilizing such existing departments or agencies as he may designate, to provide for employing citizens of the United States who are unemployed, in the construction, maintenance and carrying on of works of a public nature in connection with the forestation of lands belonging to the United States or to the several States which are suitable for timber production, the prevention of forest fires, floods and soil erosion, plant pest and disease control, the construction, maintenance or repair of paths, trails and fire-lanes in the national parks and national forests, and such other work on the public domain, national and State, and Government reservations incidental to or necessary in connection with any projects of the character enumerated, as the President may determine to be desirable: Provided, That the President may in his discretion extend the provisions of this Act to lands owned by counties and municipalities and lands in private ownership, but only for the purpose of doing thereon such kinds of cooperative work as are now provided for by Acts of Congress in preventing and controlling forest fires and the attacks of forest tree

pests and diseases and such work as is necessary in the public interest to control floods. (73d Congress, 1933, p. 22)

The act's wording provided the President with considerable latitude in determining where and in what type of work the various camps would be engaged.

The wording of the section dealing with the administration of the enrollees was similarly empowering.

The President is further authorized, by regulation, to provide for housing the persons so employed and for furnishing them with such subsistence, clothing, medical attendance and hospitalization, and cash allowance, as may be necessary, during the period they are so employed, and, in his discretion, to provide for the transportation of such persons to and from the places of employment. (73d Congress, 1933, pp. 22-23)

In a relatively progressive statement the Act provided an anti-discrimination clause. The only African-American Congressman at the time, Republican Representative Oscar De Priest of Illinois proposed the amendment declaring, "no discrimination shall be made on account of race, color, or creed" (73d Congress, p. 23; Cole, 1999; Johnson, 1972b; Salmond, 1967). The act also served to bar anyone under conviction of a crime and serving sentence from joining the Corps (73d Congress).

While some debate on the bill occurred in the Senate and particularly in the House, the legislation was passed with little opposition. Larger domestic and international events served to occupy the public and allow the bill to pass through the legislative process relatively quietly. Even the concerns of the labor movement did not hinder the passing of the bill. William Green of the A.F.L. claimed that the proposed

thirty dollars per month pay scale would cause widespread reductions in worker pay. Labor's arguments failed to slow the legislation. The speed of movement and lack of debate on the act served F.D.R. well. The final version emerged from the House and Senate only ten days after the President's address to Congress and provided him with wider authority than he had originally requested (Davis, 1986; Saalberg, 1962; Salmond, 1967).

Following an April 3 meeting of involved cabinet secretaries, on April 5 the president released Executive Order No. 6101. The order served to delineate the organization and administration of the C.C.C. It further established the advisory council, appointed a director, and authorized the fiscal aspects of the program (Holland & Hill, 1974; Rosenman, 1938; Salmond, 1967; Wirth, 1980).

In the executive order F.D.R. addresses the composition of the C.C.C. Advisory Council. "The Secretary of War, the Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary of the Interior, and the Secretary of Labor shall appoint a representative, and said representatives shall constitute an Advisory Council to the Director of Emergency Conservation Work" (Rosenman, 1938, pp. 107-108). In a footnote to this section of the executive order found in Rosenman's papers F.D.R. clarifies the mission of the C.C.C. Advisory Council. He claims

The purpose of the Advisory Council named in the order was to obtain for the Director the assistance and continued cooperation of the four Government departments which have been used in the launching and subsequent operation of the program – War, Interior, Agriculture and Labor. (p. 108)

In a move designed to placate the labor movement, Executive Order 6101 appointed Robert Fechner as Director of Emergency Conservation Work. Emergency Conservation Work remained the official title of the organization popularly known as the Civilian Conservation Corps until an official name change in 1937. F.D.R. and other government officials commonly referred to the organization as the C.C.C. before and throughout its nine-year tenure. Born in 1876 in Chattanooga, Tennessee, Fechner received his public school education in the Georgia educational system. After briefly attending Georgia Tech, Fechner quit school at age sixteen to work on Georgian railroads selling newspapers and candy. Soon Fechner became a machinist's apprentice for the old Georgia Central Railroad. During his four-year internship he joined the American Federation of Labor. Soon elected the secretary of his local chapter, he also became secretary of the state A.F.L. chapter. Fechner worked as a machinist throughout the Western Hemisphere until the late 1890s (Saalberg 1962; Salmond, 1967).

In 1901, after returning to Georgia and reentering serious union activity, he was elected to the General Executive Board of the International Association of Machinists and became a Vice-President of the A.F.L. A strong proponent for limited workdays, Fechner had important roles in the 1901 movement for the nine-hour workday, and the 1915 movement for the eight-hour workday. A well-respected authority on industrial-labor relations, Fechner delivered lectures on the topic at the Harvard Business School, Brown and Dartmouth. During World War I Fechner served in Washington D.C. as a labor representative on several mediation boards. It was during this period that he first met the Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Franklin Roosevelt. In numerous instances, Roosevelt had opportunity to mark Fechner's patience and skill in negotiation. Through



the years the two men maintained a relationship and Fechner supported F.D.R.'s 1932 presidential election bid. Through his efforts the Machinist's Union backed F.D.R. in 1932 as well. When Roosevelt began looking for a C.C.C. leader able to quell labor's concerns with the low pay and alleged regimentation of the organization, Fechner's name was close at hand (Saalberg, 1962; Salmond, 1967; Wirth, 1980).

With the notable exception of Harold Ickes (Ickes, 1954a; Salmond, 1967), who found Fechner difficult to work with, most authors found him to be an outstanding individual. They describe him as fair, tactful, patient, sensitive, efficient, well liked, trusted, hard working, affable, and honest (Saalberg, 1962; Salmond; Unofficial Observer, 1934; Wirth, 1980). Wirth states, "Fechner was in his late fifties when he took the job, and I really believe he undertook the task primarily because he liked people, especially young people, and he felt that he could do something to help them" (p. 81). Just as important to Roosevelt as the former characteristics were two additional inclinations. Fechner was not a political radical or a social reformer. He was not a typical "New Dealer." The director once remarked that he was, "a potato bug among dragonflies." He was a simple man who seemed proud of his relatively low level of education when compared with other administration officials. Fechner often claimed, "that his clerks were more educated than he (Salmond, p. 28)." The combination of these points with his background in the labor movement made him a logical choice to put labor's fears to rest (Saalberg; Salmond; Unofficial Observer; Wirth, 1980).

Fechner's choice for Assistant Director of the C.C.C. was another machinist, James J. McEntee. McEntee, described as "a bluff, quick-tempered Irishman," (Salmond, 1967, p. 29) was born in Jersey City in 1884. McEntee served his machinists

apprenticeship in New York. His first contact with Fechner came in 1911 when he began work as an officer in the International Association of Machinists. During World War I McEntee served on the New York Arbitration Board at President Woodrow Wilson's request. Throughout the 1920s McEntee worked to resolve strikes and negotiate contracts. Upon Fechner's death on New Year's Eve, 1939, McEntee became director of the C.C.C. He served in this capacity until the end of the program in 1942 (Salmond; Wirth, 1980).

The President's rather vague administrative structure for the C.C.C. placed Fechner in a difficult situation. In a handwritten memo drawn up on April 3 during a White House conference, Roosevelt, for the first time, committed to paper his plans for the organizational structure of the C.C.C. Four boxes were drawn on the sheet. They were labeled: Labor, Army, Agriculture, and Interior. Immediately over these boxes were brief descriptions of the role of each agency in the C.C.C. organization. At the top of the page F.D.R. had written "Fechter," a misspelling of Fechner, and drawn a line from it to each agency. This structure implied that Fechner controlled the C.C.C. related activities of the four departments. This was not the case. As cabinet level departments the secretary of each had easy access to the President. Action could only result from an agreement between Fechner and the individual department. When conflict between the director and a department arose, Fechner approached F.D.R. for a resolution. The President could then force the department into compliance. At times, however, the secretary persuaded Roosevelt to force Fechner and the C.C.C. administration into compliance with their wishes (Nixon, 1957; Saalberg, 1962; Salmond, 1967; Wirth, 1944, 1980).

Roosevelt also defined his role in the C.C.C. in a note at the bottom of the page. He wrote, "I want personally to check on the location, scope, etc. of the camp, assign work to be done, etc." However, as F.D.R. was busy with the problems of a nation in turmoil in the spring of 1933, he lacked the time to give the personal attention he desired to the C.C.C. Early in the program, the President turned over the job of C.C.C. supervision to Howe. Howe soon became the intermediary between Roosevelt and Fechner. Roosevelt's failure to provide the necessary attention to the selection of camps greatly hampered the advancement of the young Corps. His early insistence on personally approving each camp location and work project seriously limited Fechner's authority. This order served to hinder his ability to reach the President's goal of placing 250,000 young men in camps by early summer (Roosevelt, 1949; Saalberg, 1962; Salmond, 1967; Wirth, 1980).

Hampered by F.D.R.'s notation, Fechner nonetheless pressed forward with the daunting business of putting the C.C.C. into operation. As the Director was charged with coordinating the C.C.C. involvement of four Cabinet level departments, he ordered them to carry out the functions he deemed necessary to establish the Corps (Fechner, 1938; McEntee, 1940; Saalberg, 1962; Salmond, 1967; Wirth, 1980). According to McEntee, F.D.R.

Told the Labor Department to select the men; he told the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture to designate the work sites of the camps and plan and supervise the work program; he told the War Department to examine, accept, transport, feed, house and clothe the men. (p. 12)

With the exception of the War Department, which took on expanded roles almost immediately, this basic organizational structure remained stable until the C.C.C. program ended in mid 1942 (Salmond, 1967).

### **The Labor Department and the Civilian Conservation Corps**

Secretary of Labor Francis Perkins realized that the responsibility of selecting the C.C.C. enrollees was an immense one. Perkins immediately contacted W. Frank Persons. Persons was well known to Perkins as a capable American Red Cross official as a result of her dealings with him during World War I. Through her efforts, Persons accepted the position of Chief of C.C.C. Selection for the Department of Labor. In addition to his position of Chief of Selection, Persons served as the Department of Labor representative to the C.C.C. Advisory Council throughout the entire program. Persons's liberal sensitivities provided balance to the Army's conservative influence in formative C.C.C. policy discussions (Saalberg, 1962; Salmond, 1967).

In order to place the 250,000 young men promised by Roosevelt in C.C.C. camps by early summer, Persons had to find a fast, efficient means of selection and enrollment. He decided to rely upon pre-existing local relief agencies to select the young men. The C.C.C. selection agents were all employees of municipal or county welfare and relief agencies. These local organizations were not reimbursed by the C.C.C. for their efforts. This pragmatic decision to rely on existing organizations for selection yielded the needed results. The local selection process was fast and efficient. It allowed the local agencies that already knew which young men were qualified to make the selections. To coordinate the C.C.C. related aspects of the local relief agencies Persons designated state directors of selection (Saalberg, 1962; Salmond, 1967; Wirth, 1980).

On April 3, F.D.R. officially set the size of the C.C.C. at 250,000. He informed the Department of Labor that the initial C.C.C. enrollment of 25,000 would be chosen from the ranks of unmarried young men between the ages of eighteen to twenty-five. In addition, Roosevelt required the potential enrollees to have relief dependent immediate relatives. These relatives would receive a substantial portion of the enrollee's pay. Of their monthly wage of thirty dollars, twenty-two to twenty-five dollars was allotted to dependents. F.D.R. further ordered selection to begin on April 6 (Saalberg, 1962; Salmond, 1967; Wirth, 1980).

The job of the local selection officers was a formidable one. Each potential C.C.C. enrollee underwent a thorough personal interview with a selection agent in order to determine their suitability. Wirth (1980) states the selection officials

Determined that the man needed employment and that his family was in need of substantial support from his earnings. The interviewers had to establish that the enrollee, if finally accepted, could perform hard work without injury to himself and was free from communicable disease. They obtained a good record of his past experience, his interests, and his general character. If the welfare officials felt the man met CCC standards and qualifications, they asked him to report for medical examination to make certain that his health would permit him to do hard work. (p. 94)

On May 10, after a series of setbacks, Fechner asked the Army to develop a plan to insure the reaching of the President's goal of 250,000 men in camps by early summer. Colonel Duncan Major, the War Department representative to the C.C.C. advisory council, created a "bold scheme" to ensure the meeting of the goal (Salmond,

1967, p. 40). As part of his plan, the Department of Labor was to select 8,450 young men per day. This rate was higher than the World War I combined U.S. induction rate for both the Army and Navy. Persons's system of selection was equal to the task. When combined with the logistical effort of the Army the President's goal was met. By July 1, 1933, 274,375 enrollees were present in camps throughout the nation (Saalberg, 1962; Salmond).

This remarkably effective system of selection remained fundamentally intact throughout the history of the C.C.C. Even so, many minor changes in selection policy did occur. In January 1935 the President decreed that no enrollee could stay in camp more than one year. F.D.R. intended this provision as a means of spreading the benefits of the C.C.C. to as many young men as possible. Under the influence of Harry Hopkins, eventually the enrollee upper age limit was increased to twenty-eight and the length of service limit rose to eighteen months. The upper age limit decreased later. In 1940 the mandatory relief provision was removed. Any young man "with good personal qualifications" could be enrolled (Saalberg, 1962; Salmond, 1967, p. 201). A 1941 C.C.C. publication detailed the qualifications to potential enrollees.

You must be a citizen of the United States – You may be a fine fellow but if not an American citizen you cannot join the CCC. You must be a young man between 17 and 23 years....You must be unmarried – Young men who have never been married make up most of the enrollees; but you are still eligible if you are divorced or a widower. You must be out of school. If you are still in school, or on vacation, you are not eligible. The CCC is not a substitute for school; it is a program of work experience and training. You must allot a portion of your pay to

your dependents. Since one of the aims of the CCC is to relieve distress caused through unemployment, enrollees must financially help those dependent upon them. You must enroll for a period of at least 6 months. Six months is the minimum period of enrollment; but an enrollee may re-enroll for other 6-month periods up to a maximum of 2 years. You must be willing to accept enrollment in any one of the 1,500 CCC camps. As far as possible enrollees are placed in camps located near their enrollment station, but enrollees will be assigned to camps where and when needed. (Federal Security Agency, Civilian Conservation Corps, 1941)

### **The War Department and the Civilian Conservation Corps**

Initially F.D.R. intended to utilize the War Department in a limited role in the mobilization and continuing administration of the C.C.C. The U.S. Army would be responsible for receiving the enrollees from the Department of Labor and transporting them to a regionally designated Army base. For the next four weeks the Army would provide the enrollees with physical conditioning designed to ready them for the rigors of outdoor work. In addition they sought to instill a sense of unit camaraderie in order to facilitate positive camp life for the young men. At the end of the conditioning period the Army would turn the enrollees over to the technical agencies, the N.P.S. and the U.S.F.S. At a March House of Representatives hearing Army Chief of Staff, Douglas A. MacArthur underscored the limited role of the Army in the C.C.C. He emphasized the fact that the young men would not be subject to military discipline or training (Johnson, 1972a; Otis et al., 1986; Putnam, 1973; Saalberg, 1962; Salmond, 1967).

The President originally planned for the Department of the Interior through the N.P.S. and the Department of Agriculture through the U.S.F.S to operate the individual camps as well as supervise work projects. In mid-November 1932, Henry Wallace, the incoming Secretary of Agriculture, and Rexford Tugwell, F.D.R.'s economic advisor held a meeting with U.S.F.S. chief forester Major Robert K. Stuart. Wallace and Tugwell told Stuart, a disciple of Pinchot and a confirmed conservationist, to lay plans with the objective of putting 25,000 men to work in the national forests on reforestation projects. Stuart was certain the U.S.F.S. could accommodate such a number. When F.D.R. increased the initial enrollment figures to 250,000 the Departments of Agriculture and Interior expressed doubts about their ability to work with a group of that size. The N.P.S. and the U.S.F.S had neither the manpower nor the logistical experience necessary to prevent the massive C.C.C. mobilization from descending into chaos. Roosevelt soon realized the only federal agency immediately capable of the rapid organization and administration of the C.C.C. camp system was the U.S. Army (Fechner, 1938; Johnson, 1972a; Otis et al., 1986; Putnam, 1973; Roosevelt, 1949; Saalberg, 1962; Salmond, 1967; Wirth, 1980). Saalberg states

At this point the original plans for limited military participation in the Civilian Conservation Corps faltered. Both the Forest Service and the Park Service, which had been enthusiastic about the undertaking from the start, indicated to the President that they did not possess sufficient personnel to administer the camps and supervise the work. Were the truth known, they also lacked the supply and administrative facilities necessary for the logistical support of so vast a program as the President envisaged...For Roosevelt the solution of the problem was



simple. The Army had material to build the camps, it had officers to run the camps, it had experience in such matters. Order the Army to take over and run the camps. (p. 32)

Eleanor Roosevelt (1949) reinforces Saalberg's statement. She claims that her husband acted pragmatically in increasing the military presence in the camps. She states

Certain of the arrangements, of course, were a matter of necessity. There was, for example, no organization except the army that had the tents and other supplies essential for a set-up of this kind, which was why part of the program was promptly put under its jurisdiction. (p. 135)

Unlike the N.P.S. and U.S.F.S. the Army was not enthusiastic about its role in the C.C.C. Military leaders believed that widespread involvement in the nation-wide conservation program would lead to neglect of their primary mission, the defense of the nation. The U.S. Army of the early 1930s believed that they were separate from the social problems plaguing the nation. Twice during the Hoover administration proposals were made promoting the use of the Army to assist with the relief of the unemployed. The Army administration strongly opposed the proposed implementation of these programs. On April 8, the newly appointed War Department representative to the C.C.C. advisory council, Colonel Duncan K. Major, was summoned to the White House by Colonel Howe. Howe informed Major of the President's decision to put the Army in control of all C.C.C. operations excluding the supervision of the work projects. Major protested vigorously, but to no avail. Secretary of War George Dern took the case of the Army to Roosevelt. He too failed. (Johnson, 1972a; Putnam, 1973; Saalberg, 1962; Salmond, 1967).

Hampered by the nature of the C.C.C. administrative structure and F.D.R.'s insistence on personally approving campsites and major purchases, the Corps grew slowly during the first weeks. Realizing that if changes were not made Roosevelt's goal of placing 250,000 men in camps by July 1 would not be reached, the Army received more power. Fechner allowed the Army to forego standard procurement procedures and purchase necessary items on the open market. He temporarily provided all available C.C.C. funds to the Army. The Army cancelled all command and staff schools and reassigned the detailed officers and 60 percent of the school faculties to the C.C.C. Of the 9,936 Army officers on duty March 31, 1933, the C.C.C. demanded 5,239 for administrative duty in camps and corps headquarters. As no other federal agency had the necessary materials, the Army supplied the C.C.C. with tools and clothing from its war reserve stockpiles (Fechner, 1938; Griffith, 1979; Johnson, 1972a; Putnam, 1973; Saalberg, 1962; Salmond, 1967).

By increasing Army involvement F.D.R.'s seemingly unattainable goal was met and exceeded. By July 1, 1933, 274,375 young men were working in C.C.C. camps throughout the nation. The accomplishment was widely acknowledged with wonder (Saalberg, 1962; Salmond, 1967; Wirth, 1980). In a 1938 report to the President, Fechner makes a comparison between the first 3 months of C.C.C. and World War I mobilization.

After deducting losses from all causes, 270,000 occupied 1,330 work camps in the forests of the country by June 29. Fifty-five thousand men in 335 companies were transported from the eastern corps areas to the far Western States of the Ninth Corps Area. A comparison with World War accomplishment is interesting. During the corresponding first 3 months of the World War, the War Department

mobilized by July 1, 1917, 117,000 men in the Regular Army, 58,000 men in the National Guard, and 6,000 men in the National Army, or a total of 181,000 men. By that date less than 16,000 men (mostly regular Army units) had embarked for France. (p. 9)

The Army enjoyed a position of unique power in the C.C.C. The emergency provisions enacted to meet F.D.R.'s mid-summer goal served to strengthen its status. As the agency responsible for most aspects of camp organization and administration the Army was central in the first months of C.C.C. policy formation. However, once the period of rapid change was over, the War Department came to view its role in the C.C.C. as administrators of policy rather than creators or critics of it (Johnson, 1972a; Putnam, 1973).

Fechner's relationship with the War Department was amicable overall. Occasional differences surfaced from time to time, but most were resolved in the Advisory Council meetings without necessitating the involvement of the President (Salmond, 1967). Early in the C.C.C. program the Army discovered that Fechner was not an easily intimidated administrator. In *The New Dealers* this observation of Fechner is recorded.

At first the Army, which organized and officered the camps, tried to turn the C.C.C. into a purely army project. It found that this quiet, stolid, friendly man, with his heavy spectacles and drooping head, could not be outwitted or bamboozled by even the highest ranking generals. (Unofficial Observer, 1934, p. 165)

After Fechner's death in 1939, James McEntee assumed the position of C.C.C. director. He worked well with the Army until the Corp's abolishment in July, 1942 (Saalberg, 1962; Salmond).

The Army's C.C.C. camp administrative structure remained fairly constant throughout the nine-year program. The Army divided the U.S. into nine corps areas. A general officer commanded each Corps area. The Army subdivided each corps areas into multiple districts with a commanding officer stationed at an Army post. The district commanding officer, who primarily functioned as the intermediary between the Corps area headquarters and the individual camps, was served by several staff members (Putnam, 1973; Salmond, 1967). They included, "an executive officer, an adjutant, a chaplain, and a medical officer" (Salmond, p. 84).

For the first six months of the program the task of C.C.C. camp and corps district administration was the responsibility of the regular Army. Later, as the Army became convinced that Roosevelt intended that their role be a long term one, the camp administration policy change. The Army called reserve officers to serve as camp administrators. By early 1934 the Army had replaced the regular officers with over 5,000 reserve officers. In early 1935 F.D.R. authorized the use of Marine and Navy reserve officers to augment the C.C.C. camp administrative structure (Johnson, 1972a; Saalberg, 1962; Salmond, 1967).

At each C.C.C. camp a standard administrative structure prevailed. A commanding officer, typically a captain or first lieutenant in the Army or Army Reserve administered the program. A junior officer was second in command. The commanding and executive officers tour of duty was nominally six months, but were typically

extended ad infinitum. The commanding officer's general responsibilities included the running of the camp, the supervision of personnel, and insuring the welfare of the enrollees. Although not subject to military discipline, any enrollee infractions of C.C.C. standards were dealt with by the commander. The punishments at his disposal ranged from admonitions to dishonorable discharge. The camp commanders status remained stable until mid-1939 when their active duty status changed. The same camp commanders continued to serve in their original capacities, but as civilian employees and inactive members of a military reserve program. Even in their new civilian guise the camp commanders continued to report to the regular Army (Federal Security Agency, Civilian Conservation Corps, 1941; Hill, 1939; Holland & Hill, 1974; Otis et al., 1986; Saalberg, 1962; Salmond, 1967).

An assortment of men assisted the camp commander in the execution of his duties. The junior officer supervised camp finances, motor transport, supply, and later in the program, education. A camp surgeon, typically, but not exclusively a military officer, was responsible for medical services at one or more closely situated camps. In later years civilian contract physicians served many camps. By mid-1934 each camp also had a civilian educational advisor. The balance of C.C.C. camp positions such as assistant educational advisor, exchange steward, company clerk, first aid assistant, supply steward, senior leader, mess steward, pool attendant, laundry attendant, dining room orderly, and barracks leaders were enrollees specially selected by the camp commanders for their positions. In addition to the enrollees, each camp was allotted ten project assistants, or Local Experienced Men, commonly referred to as LEMS, for the supervision of work projects. The C.C.C. used five of these for field work and five for work around the camp.

The Corps selected these men without adhering to the selection standards established for junior enrollees (Hill, 1939; Holland & Hill, 1974; National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35; 1933-1942; Otis et al., 1986; Salmond, 1967).

The Army was also responsible for the construction and organization of the camp areas and facilities. Early in the program the C.C.C. used tents for living quarters and administrative offices. By late 1933, under pressure from the Army and American Forest Products, Inc., Fechner decided to utilize semi-permanent wooden structures. Though not always, the C.C.C. placed most camps in remote locations, miles from the nearest settlement. Over the first years of C.C.C. operation the camps grew to include more than a dozen structures. (Hill, 1939; Holland and Hill, 1974; McEntee, 1940; Otis et al., 1986). Second C.C.C. Director McEntee describes a typical camp.

Every CCC camp is a small town. Its normal population is about two hundred and twenty....In the beginning there were tents and mud. Now there are wooden barracks and gravel walks. Most of the camps are so arranged that there is a quadrangle or little park in the middle with most of the buildings grouped around....There are five barracks which serve as dormitories, with about forty young men in each....The mess hall is the important building in camp....The recreation hall – the “rec” hall – and the educational building are the other community buildings. The “rec” hall usually has pool tables, ping-pong tables, checker boards and other games. It almost always has a store that sells everything from cigarettes and ice cream to trunks. Sometimes they call it the canteen and sometimes the camp exchange. There may be a barber shop in one corner....The educational building is part shop, part classrooms and part library and reading

room. The shop part is equipped with tools and frequently with power saws and lathes....The library and reading room have sometimes as many as 1,000 books.... The camp headquarters and supply room usually occupy one building. The technical service offices are usually in another...There is always a camp hospital, usually called the infirmary or dispensary. Then of course, there are a number of other buildings: the shower and latrine building, the garage, the tool house, the blacksmith shop, and various technical service buildings. Often there is enough space adjoining the camp to build a baseball field. (1940, pp. 30-32)

Exclusive of time spent at work projects, the War Department supervised the lives of the men. While allowing for some variation due to seasons and locations, the daily camp schedules were fairly standard throughout the nation. Awakened by a bugle call, a martial broadcast over the camp public address system, or the whistle of a senior leader, the enrollees rose at 6:00 AM for reveille. The military led them in calisthenics for 15 minutes. At 6:45 AM the men reported for breakfast. After breakfast the enrollees policed the camp grounds and barracks. At the 7:45 AM work call the men climbed into trucks for the trip to the work site. If the project was near the camp, the drivers returned the men for noon meals. If the project was farther from camp the men ate hot lunches at the work site. The men worked a 40-hour week, eight hours per day under the supervision of one of the technical services, typically the U.S.F.S., N.P.S. or the S.C.S. If weather led to a lost day during the week the men worked on Saturday to get back on schedule. At 4:00 PM the enrollees climbed back into the trucks for the return trip to camp. The men gathered at the camp flagpole for retreat at 5:00 PM. For retreat the enrollees showered, shaved, and changed from their work denim clothing to their green

uniforms. The flag was lowered and the commanding officer inspected the men. After retreat the men reported to the mess hall for the evening meal. The time from 5:30 PM until 10:00 PM could be used by the enrollee in a variety of ways. Most evenings the young men could attend educational courses. If not attending a course the enrollees could gather in the library, reading room, or recreation hall to read, talk, play games, or rest. Each week the commanding officer held an evening company meeting. Subjects for the meeting included personal hygiene, courtesy, etiquette, and safety topics. Often the company meeting was followed by the showing of a movie. At 9:30 or 9:45 PM the camp's lights flashed on and off signaling the men to prepare for bed. Lights out was at 10:00 PM. At 11:00 the company commander walked through each barracks with a flashlight to insure that each man was in bed. On Saturdays the men worked in the camps painting, cleaning, and improving the grounds. Saturday evenings the enrollees were taken to the nearest town for a recreational excursion. Many of the men dated local girls or went to movies (Federal Security Agency, Civilian Conservation Corps, 1941; Hill, 1939; Holland & Hill, 1974; McEntee, 1940).

Through the first years of C.C.C. operation the Army remained fundamentally opposed to their involvement in the organization. Though Army participation in the C.C.C. appeared to be a success, they did not desire a permanent part in its administration. In late 1934 General MacArthur recommended that the Army vigorously oppose its permanent involvement in the C.C.C. In 1936 the Army forbade General Tyner, then War Department Representative to the C.C.C. Advisory Council, to discuss a permanent Army role in the C.C.C. As the C.C.C. program continued U.S. and world conditions changed. At home, the U.S. economy improved. Abroad, the threat of war in



Europe and the Pacific loomed. As a result the Army Chief of Staff, General George Marshall, in May 1941 requested that Army G-1 and G-4 consider the rapid removal of the Army from the C.C.C. Marshall justified the request by citing the serious need for officers in the expanding Army. Though this request was never forwarded to the executive branch, in October F.D.R. instituted a gradual release of the Army from the C.C.C. Before the C.C.C. fully implemented the changes the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 and the resultant immersion in war led to the end of the program. On June 30, 1942 Congress voted to discontinue funding to the C.C.C. and military personnel were transferred elsewhere (Johnson, 1972a; Putnam, 1973; Salmond, 1967; Sherraden, 1981; Wirth, 1980).

The War Department was ultimately responsible for the C.C.C. education program. Although sympathetic to the notion of providing the young enrollees with educational opportunities, F.D.R. initially demanded no formal educational provisions in the camps. Eleanor Roosevelt supported the formation of a C.C.C. educational program (Roosevelt, 1949; Salmond, 1967). She recalls her husband's thoughts

Franklin realized that the boys should be given some other kind of education as well, but it had to be subordinate to the day's labor required of them. That phase of the program was never as well planned as the physical work program. (1949, p. 135).

In May 1933, Frank Persons, Department of Labor Representative to the C.C.C. Advisory Council, submitted an education plan to Fechner. He proposed placing an educational counselor in each camp. While widely popular the plan found ill favor with the conservative natures of both Fechner and the Army. The Army feared an educational

program could allow for leftist or radical corruption of the camps. The pressure to create an educational program continued. The newly appointed federal commissioner of education, George F. Zook, promoted the idea to Roosevelt (Putnam, 1973; Salmond, 1967). After hearing of the President's support for the idea, an outraged Colonel Major claimed

I have constantly fought the attempts of long-haired men and short-haired women to get in our camps...we are going to be hounded to death by all sorts of educators. Instead of teaching the boys how to do an honest day's work we are going to be forced to accede to the wishes of the long-haired men and short-haired women and spend most of the time on some kind of an educational course.

(Salmond, pp. 48-49)

By the fall of 1933 Fechner began to warm to the idea of an education program. Colonel Howe requested that Persons develop a plan for such a program for the C.C.C. With Zook's assistance a plan took shape. Under the proposed program a director of education would serve under Fechner. An education coordinator in each corps area and an education adviser in each camp would execute the planned program. Support for the program grew in most quarters, exclusive of the Army (Hill, 1935; Holland & Hill, 1974; Salmond, 1967). On a tour of a C.C.C. camp in Shenandoah National Park with F.D.R. in August, 1933 Secretary of the Interior Ickes stated, "...we are going to assign teachers to these camps, not on invitation of the Army but in spite of the Army" (1953, p. 80).

The War Department, fearful of the increasing support for an education program, took the offensive. MacArthur proposed a modified form of Zook's program. Under the MacArthur plan the Department of the Interior's Office of Education would administer

the program. Led by a director and an advisory committee, the Office of Education staff would report to the Secretary of War on all matters of importance including curriculum, instructional outlines, teaching methods, and types of educational materials used in the camps. The military also sought to retain control of the education program at lower levels. At the corps area level, a corps area educational adviser, selected by the Office of Education, reported directly to the corps commander. In each camp the camp education adviser was responsible to the camp commander. The MacArthur plan compelled the camp military leadership and the technical services to assist the educational endeavor by teaching courses. The program was strictly voluntary and conducted in the evenings with no loss of work time (Hill, 1935; Holland & Hill, 1974; Salmond, 1967).

The President approved the plan on November 22, 1933. Dr. C.S. Marsh, the Dean of the Evening Session at the University of Buffalo, became the Educational Director on December 29, 1933. By mid-1934 the education program was fully underway. The program sought to provide educational services to a diverse population of 250,000 young men with wide variation in educational backgrounds ranging from no formal training to college graduates. The camp advisers presented subjects ranging from remedial reading and vocational courses to philosophy (Hill, 1935; Holland & Hill, 1974; Salmond, 1967). The official education adviser handbook enumerates the “dominant aims of the educational activities”

1. To develop in each man his powers of self-expression, self-entertainment, and self-culture.
2. To develop pride and satisfaction in cooperative endeavor.

3. To develop as far as practicable an understanding of the prevailing social and economic conditions, to the end that each man may cooperate intelligently in improving these conditions.
4. To preserve and strengthen good habits of health and of mental development.
5. By such vocational training as is feasible, but particularly by vocational counseling and adjustment activities, to assist each man better to meet his employment problems when he leaves camp.
6. To develop an appreciation of nature and country life. (United States Department of the Interior, Office of Education, 1934)

While Fechner initially opposed the educational program he came to support it.

His overriding concern for the welfare of the enrollees was evident. Conrad Wirth recalls:

It was surprising to some of us that many of the young men who showed up in the camps were illiterate. Bob Fechner made it clear that he wanted the army and supervising forces to do everything possible to see that nobody left the CCC without mastering at least the fundamental elements of reading and writing (Wirth, 1980, p. 82).

Even though Fechner supported the education program, he never felt that it was as important to the C.C.C. as the conservation projects or the relief function the organization served. Holland and Hill write:

In the early stages of educational efforts Fechner was aloof and apparently little interested. And even in April 1937, when he and his staff appeared before the Senate Committee on Education and Labor in connection with a bill to make the

corps a permanent organization, he relegated education and training to a subordinate position, although most CCC officials in the field had accepted them as of primary importance, if not indeed the chief objects of their efforts....Fechner indicated his attitude in the following dialogue with Representative Griswold of Indiana and Representative Allen of Delaware:

Fechner: I think it might be said that there are just two principal objectives – the relief of unemployment and the accomplishment of useful work.

Griswold: Do you not think there is any objective in connection with fitting the boys for the future?

Fechner: I think that is one of the incidental objectives.

Allen: That is where you and I disagree.

Fechner: When I said incidental, I did not mean to imply that it was not important.

(Holland & Hill, 1974, pp. 97-98)

Despite conflicting departmental attitudes, the military supervised education program was a success. By mid-1937, 35,000 illiterate young enrollees had learned to read and write. Even with its successes the educational program would remain controversial through the end of the C.C.C. experiment in 1942 (Hill, 1935; Holland & Hill, 1974; Salmond, 1967)

### **The Department of Interior and the Civilian Conservation Corps**

In April 1933, Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes appointed N.P.S. Director Horace M. Albright as the first Department of the Interior representative to the C.C.C. advisory council. Albright, a Berkley trained lawyer described as a “Mather man” by

Conrad Wirth (1980, p. 21), held the position until his retirement in August 1933.

Director Albright's relationship with Stephen Mather went back to the years before the founding of the N.P.S. in 1916. Together they formulated early N.P.S. policy, with Albright taking control of the organization after Mather's death in 1930. By August 1933, the Department of the Interior was six months into the New Deal and Albright felt that the N.P.S. had adjusted well. Before his retirement and return to private business, he arranged for Arno B. Cammerer, another of Stephen Mather's intimates, to succeed him as Director. Cammerer also took over Albright's place on the C.C.C. Advisory Council representing Ickes in the protection of Department of Interior interests (Dennis, 2001; Paige, 1985; Salmond, 1967; Wirth, 1980).

As defined by the President, the role of the Department of the Interior, as well as the Department of Agriculture, in the C.C.C. was to select the work projects, supervise the work of the men, and administer their assigned camps on Department lands. With the exception of the Army's almost immediate assumption of the camp administration role, the Department of the Interior's duties remained basically unchanged throughout the C.C.C. program (Salmond, 1967; Unrau & Williss, 1983).

While following second to the Department of Agriculture in the total number of C.C.C. camps, the Department of the Interior, through the N.P.S. operated projects on a variety of lands throughout the nation. Camps were placed on N.P.S. and Indian lands. In addition, the department completely managed the C.C.C. program in the Virgin Islands, Alaska, and Hawaii. The N.P.S. also, through cooperation with many state governments, supervised numerous state park projects throughout the United States (Unrau & Williss, 1983; Wirth, 1944, 1980).

As an Assistant Director based in Washington D.C. during the hectic days of Spring 1933, Conrad Wirth witnessed the birth of the National Park Service's C.C.C. State Park Program. Wirth (1980) writes

Albright also sent wires on April 3 to all the state park authorities telling them that the state parks would definitely come within the purview of the act that authorized the Civilian Conservation Corps and asking them to send representatives to a meeting in Washington on April 6 (Wirth, 1980, p. 75).

Beginning to realize the magnitude of the opportunity the C.C.C. provided them for park construction projects of a nationwide scale, the N.P.S. undertook to create a division of state park cooperation. In 1933 few states had state park systems. The opportunity the C.C.C. presented to financially strapped states served to usher the birth of widespread park divisions within many state governments (Paige, 1985; Wirth). Wirth recalls that in early 1933

The National Park Service's relationship with the state park systems had been one of informal, friendly interest, and we had no organization to carry out a work program. As we talked we began to realize that state park participation in the CCC would have to be administered apart from the going national park program. Each state had its own independent park organization, if it had a park organization at all. Coffman was put in charge of National Park Service CCC work.... The director then gave me the responsibility of organizing the state park program.... From our discussions there had emerged the idea of establishing districts for the state park CCC administration, which would bring many decision responsibilities closer to the field operations.... Herb Maier, an excellent architect

who had done some work for the National Park Service, agreed to take the Mountain district, with headquarters in Denver. (Wirth, 1980, pp. 76-77)

Under the leadership of Wirth, the N.P.S. State Park Division undertook projects throughout the nation. Working closely with the state governments and the C.C.C. administration the N.P.S. provided technical experts to supervise the construction of state parks. C.C.C. enrollees provided excellent service in this endeavor (Emergency Conservation Work, undated; Paige, 1985; Wirth, 1980).

The C.C.C. presented an excellent opportunity for the N.P.S. to improve their own lands. In keeping with N.P.S. policy, site superintendents had developed master plans for their parks. These master plans were complete project plans that would be ready for implementation when funds became available. When the C.C.C. became a reality in April 1933, the N.P.S. was ready and the master plans were put into use much as the U.S.F.S. used their recently completed American forest situation survey (Salmond, 1967; Wirth, 1980). The majority of these plans and hence the majority of the C.C.C. projects undertaken under the supervision of the N.P.S. were national park improvement and protection projects, and to a lesser degree the restoration of historic sites (Salmond). According to Wirth, the C.C.C. work projects supervised by the N.P.S. “were designed primarily to protect and conserve exceptional natural resources and to develop park and recreation areas for public benefit” (1980, p. 145). Salmond states that these C.C.C. men

Built bridges, installed telephone lines, constructed stoves, fireplaces, and picnic tables, and made dams, lakes, and swimming pools. They opened up many park areas to the public through the construction of roads and trails. Land was purchased and turned into new parks entirely by CCC labor. (p. 126)



Not all Department of Interior C.C.C. camps were used in park projects. The Department of the Interior's Bureau of Reclamation and Division of Grazing utilized the C.C.C. in water development work. C.C.C. men drilled wells, piped springs, and built dams and canals in drought prone areas. Under the supervision of the Department of the Interior, the General Land Office operated CCC camps in several western states including Oregon, Wyoming, and Alaska. Most General Land Office work took the form of reforestation, physical improvements, fire protection, and general forest protection. In Alaska the work program primarily took the form of public benefit projects in Eskimo villages. The native enrollees constructed schools, roads, and trails throughout Alaska. The General Land Office established two CCC camps in the Little Thunder Basin near Gillette, Wyoming. The men in these camps successfully worked to extinguish approximately twenty-five underground coal fires. General Land Office CCC camps conducted work in several other western states including Oregon and Alaska (Salmond, 1967; Wirth, 1944).

Through the Office of Indian Affairs, the Department of the Interior operated an extensive CCC program in the reservation system. Thousands of Native Americans enrolled in the CCC Indian Division. These young men performed useful conservation work on their reservations. Members of the CCC Indian Division operated under different regulations than other CCC members. Indian Division enrollees did not live in camps and most were married. These young men received the standard thirty dollar per month pay, but were not compelled to make an allotment (Salmond, 1967; Wirth, 1944).

By the end of the C.C.C. program in June 1942, the CCC, under the supervision of the N.P.S. had undertaken work on 655 different parks and recreation areas. They are categorized as follows

National park areas, 71; recreational demonstration areas, 23; TVA areas, 8; federal defense areas, 29; state parks, 405; county parks, 42; metropolitan parks, 75; and 2 areas not classified above, on the West Point Military Academy reservation, in New York, and on Battery Cove Federal Reservation, in Virginia. The service supervised a total of approximately 3,350 camp years, or some 580,000 man years (including camp foremen) of work. Of this work about 25 per cent was on National Park Service areas and 75 per cent on other park and recreation areas. At the peak of the program, in 1935, there were 115 camps assigned to national park areas and 475 to other areas. (Wirth, 1980, p. 145)

As evidenced above, the Department of Interior generally and the N.P.S. specifically benefited greatly from the C.C.C. Park area and facility development was advanced by many years. Wirth states, "it is believed that the work accomplished in the park conservation field in the 10 years of CCC was equal to what might have been expected in 50 years without its assistance" (1944, p. 30). In addition to park construction, the work of the CCC in fire, insect, and erosion control, as well as historic site restoration, reforestation, and other projects benefited the N.P.S. immeasurably (Wirth, 1944, 1980).

#### **The Department of Agriculture and the Civilian Conservation Corps**

Twelve days after the release of the executive order creating the C.C.C., the first camp was established near Luray, Virginia in the George Washington National Forest. It was under the control of the United States Forest Service, Department of Agriculture.

The Department of Agriculture through the U.S.F.S. controlled more C.C.C. work projects than any other federal agency (Fechner, 1938; Otis et al., 1986; Salmond, 1967).

The Department of Agriculture controlled approximately 75 percent of all C.C.C. camps. Of these the U.S.F.S. operated more than half in private, state, and national forests. Under the supervision of the U.S.F.S. the C.C.C. undertook work in two major areas. The first area, forest protection, involved several types of work. Fire protection was an important task for U.S.F.S. camps. Some enrollees served as members of fire patrols on foot, in trucks, in canoes, and in airplanes as a primary duty. Some worked to erect lookout towers, construct firebreaks and telephone lines, and improve and construct fire trails. They removed fire fuel sources such as dead underbrush and trees. For thousands of enrollees forest fire fighting was an emergency duty. When fires broke out nearby camps provided young men to fight with bulldozers, axes, grubbing hoes, saws, and pumps. The fire protection program was not without great human cost. The C.C.C. lost 47 enrollees to forest fires (Emergency Conservation Work, Forest Service Division, undated; Fechner, 1938; McEntee, 1940; Otis et al., 1986; Salmond, 1967).

Another aspect of forest protection involved the eradication of disease and insects. The Corps strove to control tree diseases such as white pine blister rust through pulling by hand the host plants such as currants and gooseberry. The young men worked to control Dutch Elm Disease. The enrollees fought insect damage to the forests by cutting down trees infected by bark beetles. Other targeted insects included the gypsy moth, weevils, and grasshoppers (Fechner, 1938; Otis et al., 1986; Salmond, 1967).

The second major type of work undertaken by the U.S.F.S. was forest improvement. This work primarily took the form of reforestation. Enrollees planted

billions of seedlings. They worked to thin overgrown stands and attended to many experimental plots. The C.C.C. conducted timber stand inventories and improvements, surveys and created forest cover maps. Forest improvement work also involved construction projects on state and federal lands. Enrollees constructed roads and trails to improve access to public lands. The C.C.C. constructed hundreds of structures in the forests including cabins, garages, warehouses, shelters, and tool houses. The young men also undertook numerous recreational improvements on state and federal forest areas. Fechner described the C.C.C. recreational improvements in the National Forests as “predominantly of the simple type” designed to provide an “opportunity for citizens to enjoy natural outdoor beauty with freedom of movement” (1938, p. 19). The enrollees constructed campgrounds, lakes, and ski areas to enhance the public’s recreational experience (Emergency Conservation Work, Forest Service Division, undated; Fechner; McEntee, 1940; Otis et al., 1986; Salmond, 1967).

Shortly after the commencement of the C.C.C. program, the U.S.F.S. found that the standard 200 man camp was not well suited for all of their purposes. After gaining permission from F.D.R. the U.S.F.S. made effective use of camps of twenty or fewer men located remote from the main camp. These side camps, popularly referred to as fly or spike camps, were particularly useful in the western U.S. in areas with limited access. They proved useful in a variety of work including lookout, road, and trail construction, forest fire prevention, and the control of disease and insects. Forest service personnel supervised both the work project and the administration of the side camp. Enrollees detailed to side camps could expect to return to the main camp for the weekend (Otis et al., 1986; Salmond, 1967).

As the Department of Agriculture controlled the work of the bulk of the C.C.C. camps it was only natural that the Secretary of Agriculture and future Vice-President, Henry Wallace, strongly supported the Corps. Wallace appointed Fred Morrell as the Department of Agriculture representative on the C.C.C. Advisory Council. Morrell, a U.S.F.S. employee and strong proponent of forest conservation, functioned as the primary Department of Agriculture policy maker for the C.C.C. Although relations between Agriculture and Fechner were generally harmonious, C.C.C. related controversies caused some interdepartmental conflict between the technical services. A significant problem developed over the overlapping of duties in the Departments of Agriculture and Interior. Soil conservation disputes were common. Before 1935 both the Department of Agriculture through the U.S.F.S. and the Department of Interior through the Soil Conservation Service operated soil conservation C.C.C. camps. Realizing that division of responsibility was necessary, F.D.R., with the support of Fechner, transferred the Soil Conservation Service to the Department of Agriculture. Secretary of the Interior Ickes was not happy with this development (Hendrickson, 2003; Salmond, 1967; Wirth, 1980).

Under the supervision of the S.C.S. the C.C.C. performed much useful work throughout the U.S. In the Department of Agriculture, the S.C.S. was second only to the U.S.F.S. in the total number of C.C.C. camps in operation. Their presence was particularly needed in the highly eroded Dust Bowl area. The S.C.S. C.C.C. projects, begun in 1934, undertook work aimed at “correcting problems that, if not major contributors to the depression, were very much worsened by it” (Cutter et al., 1991, p. 37; Fechner, 1938; McEntee, 1940; Salmond, 1967). Oklahoma Governor and U.S. Senator Robert S. Kerr (1960) describes a typical scene of such economically damaging erosion

The effect is there for the eyes to see – miniature Grand Canyons have formed and sometimes even barns have slipped into deep, ugly gullies; weeds have covered eroded fields; the proud timbers of a fine old mansion sag from neglect, its windows staring blindly without glass panes; stubby cotton and corn wilt in dry heat; scrawny cattle graze almost barren hillside pastures; and the standard of living is low. (pp. 70-71)

Through the C.C.C. the S.C.S. sought to correct erosion problems in forty-four states. Though widespread, the S.C.S. work occurred primarily in the southern and western United States. S.C.S. projects fell into three distinct categories. First, the service, with C.C.C. labor, sought to demonstrate practical soil conservation methods to farmers. These techniques included the retiring of critical slopes, rotating crops, contouring crops, and strip cropping. Second, also with C.C.C. labor, the S.C.S. conducted soil conservation work on private lands for individual farmers. This work took the form of contour fence construction, check dam construction, diversion ditch digging, checking and restoring gullies, revegetation of bare areas, and tree planting. In a common work project enrollees constructed broad terraces in order to check erosion on steep slopes. The men constructed vegetated waterways to carry and spread the water from the terraces. Some enrollees, demonstrating special aptitude, worked with engineers in the planning of this work. Finally, the service undertook research designed to develop and improve soil erosion control techniques (Fechner 1938; Salmond, 1967).

The C.C.C. contributed greatly to the land improvement efforts conducted under the supervision of the Bureau of Biological Survey, another division of the Department of Agriculture. The C.C.C. under the supervision of the B.B.S. conducted work designed to

improve wildlife habitat. Enrollees worked on the nation-wide wildlife refuge system. The young men performed a variety of tasks connected with their primary mission of improving wildlife conditions. This work included constructing fish hatcheries, wildlife shelters, and planting feed crops. The enrollees built and stocked lakes and ponds with fish (Dolin, 2003; Fechner, 1938; Salmond, 1967).

### **The Civilian Conservation Corps in Oklahoma**

The C.C.C. was very active in the state of Oklahoma. By the end of the program on June 20, 1942, 107,676 Oklahomans had served in the C.C.C. Junior and veteran enrollees accounted for 80,718 of the total. The C.C.C. Indian Division employed 21,354 Native American Oklahomans. Non-enrolled personnel consisting of camp officers, project supervisors, and LEMS made up the final 5,604. Oklahoma C.C.C. enrollees had allotted an estimated total of \$20,421,955 to their dependent family members (Federal Security Agency, Civilian Conservation Corps, 1942).

An average of 33 C.C.C. camps operated in Oklahoma through the nine-year history of the Corps. The C.C.C. undertook a wide variety of work in Oklahoma. Most Oklahoma C.C.C. camps were involved in soil conservation work in the western half of the state. The S.C.S. supervised erosion control work on thousands of Oklahoma farms. Under the supervision of the N.P.S. State Park Division, the C.C.C. created an outstanding series of state parks in the state. The U.S.F.S. oversaw C.C.C. forest protection and improvement work on private, state, and federal forests in Oklahoma. The B.B.S. utilized the C.C.C. to undertake significant work in the improvement of the wildlife refuge system in Oklahoma (Federal Security Agency, Civilian Conservation Corps; 1942; Reid, 1969; 1970).

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### CHAPTER III

#### **The Civilian Conservation Corps in the Wichita Mountains: Co. 812 Buffalo Springs, Co. 870 Elm Island, Co. 859 Panther Creek**

##### **Regional History**

The rugged Wichita Mountains region of Southwestern Oklahoma has long attracted both humans and wildlife. Archeological evidence suggests the presence of humans in the area for the past 15,000 years. The abundance of plants and wild game supported a hunting and gathering civilization well past the arrival of Europeans in North America. Until the late eighteenth century the principal Native American peoples inhabiting the region were the Wichitas. By the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the Kiowa and Comanche tribes challenged the Wichitas for supremacy of the area. While the Spanish and other European explorers traversed the region over the centuries, the Native Americans were the only permanent inhabitants until the years following the Civil War (Haley, 1973a; Meredith, Peavler, Thurman, & Drass, 1978a).

The plains tribes inhabiting the region, especially the Kiowas and Comanches, were hostile to the encroaching United States government. Thus the government had little knowledge of the Wichita Mountains region until Captain Randolph B. Marcy's 1852 expedition. Marcy's description of the area introduced the Wichita Mountains to the American public. The years following the March expedition found the U.S. Army engaged in actions against the Wichita Mountains' tribes. The military established several temporary outposts in the area including Camp Radziminski in 1858 and Fort Cobb in 1859. In 1869, following the Civil War, the Army established Fort Sill at the

southeastern edge of the Wichita Mountains range. The resultant suppression of the region's tribes increased the accessibility of the Wichita Mountains area to the American public (Haley, 1973a; Meredith et al., 1978a).

By the 1889 opening of the Unassigned Lands of Indian Territory many people desired a piece of the area that was by then a part of the Kiowa – Comanche Reservation. The Jerome Commission worked to come to a land opening agreement with the Kiowa and Comanche tribes. The groups came to an agreement to open the lands including the Wichita Mountains in 1892. However, grazing leases held by Texas cattlemen prevented any settlement for the next decade (DeSpain, 2000-2001; Haley, 1973a; Meredith et al., 1978a).

By the early twentieth century the conservation movement had reached Oklahoma. A movement led by the Oklahoma City Commercial Club sought to have the Wichita Mountains region designated a National Park. The club members, backed by prominent Oklahoma City businessmen such as J.W. Shartell and Anton Classen, distributed petitions and collected thousands of signatures in support of the preservation of the Wichitas. To win support for the project the club courted political figures. In 1900 the club held a “smoker” for the Rough Riders who held their annual meeting in Oklahoma City. Former Rough Rider commander and prominent conservationist Theodore Roosevelt attended the meeting and later became a major figure in the developing federal involvement in the Wichita Mountains (DeSpain, 2000-2001; Haley, 1973a; Meredith et al., 1978a).

President William McKinley set aside 57,120 acres of the Wichita Mountains region on July 4, 1901. The area, selected through a cooperative agreement with the

Departments of Interior and Agriculture by Territorial Governor William M. Jenkins, became known as the Wichita Forest Reserve. The Department of the Interior's General Land Office took responsibility for the management of the region (DeSpain, 2000-2001; Haley, 1973a; Meredith et al., 1978a). While still hoping for designation as a National Park, Governor Jenkins spoke of the new Forest Reserve in his 1901 annual report to the Secretary of the Interior.

In this reserve are mountain chains and peaks displaying all of the rugged and inspiring features of the scenery of the Rockies, with beautiful valleys, thinly wooded parks, running streams of purest water, mountain lakes, and mineral springs, all combining to make an ideal natural equipment for a national park which would...become a great health and pleasure resort for all the Southwest. Located within easy reach of a great scope of country, lying far distant from the resorts of the North and West, with proper degree of altitude, with constant blowing breezes laden with life-giving ozone, with beautiful scenery, fine water, and plenty of timber, a rare opportunity for health-giving recreation is here afforded the people of Oklahoma and adjoining States. (Haley, 1937a, p. 75)

Long time Preserve manager Harry French spoke to the uniqueness of the area in a 1933 letter to U.S. Senator Elmer Thomas.

It contains practically the only rugged mountains between the Rockies and the Mississippi [sic] River, and is remarkable for being, in such a small area, on the border line between the long-grass and short-grass pastures. In the early life of the State its value lay chiefly in the grazing, but as the population of the state increased, and roads were opened up and made the Forest more accessible, its

recreational possibilities have been recognized by the several million people who live upon the treeless plains about it...(French to Thomas)

In 1905 the Wichita Forest Reserve became known as the Wichita Forest and National Game Preserve under the authority of a proclamation issued by President Theodore Roosevelt. The management of the region also passed to the newly formed United States Forest Service in 1905. Under the direction of Gifford Pinchot, the U.S.F.S. undertook to stop hunting and trapping in the area. The U.S.F.S. also sought to restore and protect endangered native species in the Wichitas. In 1907 the U.S.F.S. released 15 carefully chosen buffalo from the New York Zoological Park, now known as the Bronx Zoo, in the Preserve. In the early years of the twentieth century, before the coming of the Great Depression, Preserve managers worked to restore a number of additional native species including wild turkey, prairie chicken, antelope, and elk with mixed results. Managers worked toward "reforestation" of the area by planting bois d'arc, black walnut, honey locust, and red cedar groves (DeSpain, 2000-2001; Dolin, 2003; Haley, 1973a; 1973b).

### **Roosevelt's Tree Army Arrives in the Wichita Mountains**

The work relief programs spawned by the Great Depression benefited the Wichita Forest and National Game Preserve immensely. Even before the end of the President Herbert Hoover administration interest in involving depression relief agencies in the Wichita Mountains was evident. In a November 19, 1932 letter Ray Keegan, prominent Lawton, Oklahoma, citizen, expressed his desire to utilize Hoover's Reconstruction Finance Corporation to build dams in the Preserve. Keegan sought to prompt Senator



Thomas to use his influence with Oklahoma Governor “Alfalfa Bill” Murray to secure a R.F.C. project for the Wichitas (Keegan to Thomas, 1932).

F.D.R.’s April 5, 1933, signing of the executive order authorizing the C.C.C. created a flurry of activity in Comanche County, Oklahoma. Oklahoma legislators, concerned citizens, and Preserve employees scrambled to secure a camp in the Wichita Mountains. By April 8 Senator Thomas received the first of what would become scores of requests for jobs in the Oklahoma C.C.C. camps. John Chenowith of Marlow, Oklahoma, wired Thomas a request for a C.C.C. position in northeastern Oklahoma or the Wichitas. He directed Thomas to advance his case to the highest level stating, “please see the president first moment possible” (Chenowith to Thomas, 1933). Thomas replied two days later with the first indication of a possible camp for the Wichitas. He wired “Oklahoma receives small camp for East side in first allocation funds Forest improvement purposes. Wichita Forest promised in second allocation” (Thomas to Chenowith, 1933).

On April 12 Oklahoma Sixth District Congressman Jed Johnson relayed the information printed in the first C.C.C. related article appearing in the *Lawton Constitution*. The article informed readers that young, unemployed men between the ages of 18 and 25, willing to allot a large percentage of their monthly pay to their families would be eligible for entry into the C.C.C. Quoting C.C.C. Director Robert Fechner, the article related the benefits of the Corps for these young men.

Many of these men have been unable to secure any change for self-support in the last four years, and they are, moreover, the very men who are best adapted to the

kind of work, and who are most (likely) to profit by the education and training which this opportunity will give them. (Information on, 1933, p. 1)

Estimating that between 500 and 10,000 young men could be usefully employed on conservation projects in the Wichita Mountains, Johnson optimistically worked to secure a camp for the Preserve. The congressman took the matter of a C.C.C. camp in the Wichitas directly to Fechner. The C.C.C. Director promised to take the proposal to Roosevelt and assured Johnson that a decision would likely be reached “within a week” (Johnson Seeks, 1933, p. 1).

While concerned politicians lobbied for the placement of camps in the Wichitas, U.S.F.S. officials worked to determine the feasibility of such a venture. On April 19 C.W. Granger of the U.S.F.S. claimed insufficient need to establish a 200-man C.C.C. camp in the Wichita Mountains. In a memorandum to Assistant C.C.C. Director James J. McEntee, Granger stated that the projects needed in the refuge including trail and fence construction would not provide enough work to keep 200 men busy for six months (Granger to McEntee, 1933). An April 30 article in the *Lawton Constitution* informed the public of the U.S.F.S. position that “the amount of work available did not justify” the placement of a C.C.C. camp in the Wichitas (Wichita Region, 1933).

However, Wichita Forest Supervisor French believed differently. In an April 25 letter to Senator Thomas, French claimed that 475-730 men could be usefully employed for at least six months in a variety of work in the area. He proposed the construction of roads, fences, headquarters buildings, dams, catch basins, trails, campgrounds, and firebreaks. French further suggested that C.C.C. labor be used in erosion control and reforestation projects. Given time to conduct “preliminary engineering” the supervisor

stated that the C.C.C. could be used on boundary fence and dam construction projects for “a very much longer period of time” (French to Thomas, 1933).

In a May 3 memorandum to Oliver Gartrell and the membership of the Lawton Chamber of Commerce, French repeated his claim of sufficient work to keep the C.C.C. busy for tens of thousands of “man hours.” He listed, in great detail, a number of specific improvements needed in the Preserve and the estimated number of man hours associated with each. Aware that his position ran contrary to his superiors in the U.S.F.S., long-time manager French sought to qualify his statements to the Chamber.

This is not in the form of a recommendation, as it would be presumptuous [sic] on my part to do this, considering the fact the Department which I represent, in my small way, has decided not to place any camps in this section....You of course understand the data supplied herein is not a recommendation of work to be undertaken under the Conservation program, neither can it be considered supplementary to former reports, but simply to meet a request from you and other representatives who have the development of the Wichitas at heart and who are public spirited to the extent that you not only devote a great deal of time but also personal funds for its improvement. (French to Gartrell, 1933)

The political pressure on the U.S.F.S. to recommend the Wichitas as a C.C.C. campsite increased in the following days. Senator Thomas and Congressman Johnson took special interest in the subject and continued to lobby for its support in Washington (Work Camp is, 1933). On May 6 Jed Johnson sent yet another Western Union telegram to the U.S.F.S. This time he took District Forester Peck to task for the “erroneous information” in the memorandum sent by Granger to McEntee on the nineteenth of April.

Johnson claimed that "Fechner had promised cooperation (in placing a camp in the Wichitas) if favorable report from Forest Service." However, the Granger memorandum claiming insufficient work to justify the placement of a camp in the Wichitas was holding up progress in gaining a camp for the region (Johnson to Peck, 1933). The same day Peck replied to Johnson claiming he would contact French for descriptions of work to be undertaken in the Wichitas by a potential C.C.C. camp. Also on the sixth he airmailed French a list of work projects and estimated man days of work involved with each for the superintendent's approval. Peck informed French that if the projects qualified under the C.C.C. Act then "a camp could be continued through the Winter months" (Peck to French, 1933).

In addition to the pressure from Oklahoma's Congressional delegation, on April 30 a group of Lawton Chamber of Commerce members, Ray Keegan, Joe Reed, and Frank Shipley, flew to Washington to seek support for a Wichita C.C.C. camp. The combined pressure campaign worked (Dam Program, 1934; Work Camp in, 1933). On May 8 Johnson informed the *Lawton Constitution* of the success. He wired

Pleased to advise Forestry Service today agreed approve camp site Wichita Mountains of two hundred men for six months STOP Official recommendation made to Fechner by Forestry Service for purpose of carrying out following program complete boundary fence complete work at headquarters construct trails cultivate and fence ten new tracts for game fields concrete construction of lake and reservoirs to cost forty thousand dollars also several earth catch basins camp grounds timber stands improved.

Johnson praised the work of the Chamber of Commerce delegation. He stated, “Lawton Chamber of Commerce men doing excellent work here” (Johnson to Lawton Constitution, 1933).

F.D.R. personally approved the Wichita Mountains C.C.C. camp on May 11. The President signed the order creating the camp in the presence of Congressman Johnson and Lawton Chamber of Commerce representatives Keegan, Chamber conservation committee member, and Reed, Chamber military committee member. Early indications suggested that one camp would begin the work at the Preserve in the near future. The U.S.F.S. instructed Superintendent French to take a ten-day leave in order to return to the Wichitas in time to oversee the establishment of the new camp. A *May 9 Lawton Constitution* article hinted at the potential for other camps in the Wichita Mountains. It would be possible that later in the year, as cold conditions in the northern U.S. set in, additional C.C.C. men could be transferred to help with winter projects in the Preserve (Dam Program, 1934; Roosevelt Signs, 1933; Work Camp in, 1933).

By May 21 the Army had selected potential C.C.C. campsites in the Wichitas. Captain Walter B. Fariss of the 38<sup>th</sup> Infantry stationed at Fort Sill personally conducted the survey. He selected sites based on a number of practical factors including “water facilities, probable road and railroad resources, telegraph and telephone facilities” (Wichita Work Camp, 1933, p. 1). Under Captain Fariss’s supervision, on the morning of May 27 the first 165 enrollees left the Fort Sill C.C.C. training camp by motor convoy for the newly created Wichita Mountains C.C.C. camp located near a grove of trees eight miles northwest of the U.S.F.S. headquarters (Company 812, undated; Supervisor of, 1933; Youths Are, 1933).

The C.C.C. officially designated the site Camp F-2. The “F” indicated that the work projects would occur under the supervision of the U.S.F.S. The “2” designated the site as the second U.S.F.S. C.C.C. camp in Oklahoma. Camp F-2 was popularly known as Buffalo Springs. Buffalo Springs was formerly known as Goodin Springs. It took its name from an early Wichita Mountains prospector, F.N. Goodin. Goodin built a dugout near the spring and settled there with his wife. The C.C.C. designated the group of enrollees to be stationed at Buffalo Springs, Company 812 (Company 812, undated; Meredith, Peavler, Thurman, & Drass, 1978b; Emergency Conservation Work, undated; Otis, Honey, Hogg, & Lakin, 1986; Supervisor of, 1933; Youths Are, 1933).

Soon the men were living in 25 large Army tents. The enrollees constructed a variety of camp structures including a mess hall, orderly room, supply room, camp canteen, and a bathhouse “with 12 or 15 showers” (Forest Army’s, 1933). The *Lawton Constitution* described the scene. The article stated that the camp

Presents a scene reminiscent of pioneer mining days in the “golden west.” More than 25 large tents, several new buildings, and other structures occupy this once silent mountain spot at Buffalo Springs. A camp fire may be seen only seldom. Electric lights, made possible by a camp dynamo, vary the scene somewhat from the pioneer mining camps, but the picturesque view near sundown cannot but remind the visitor of other days. Nightfall comes quickly in this mountain surrounded spot, when once the sun starts sinking behind the hills.... Worker’s tents have been erected along the southern edge of camp, at the foot of a mountain. On the edge of this mountain has been written in large white letters

which may be seen for nearly a mile, "C.C.C. No. 812." (Forest Army's, 1933, p. 8)

### **Two More C.C.C. Camps for the Wichitas**

Little more than three months after the founding of Camp F-2, Buffalo Springs, the U.S.F.S. announced the possibility of up to three additional camps for the Wichita Mountains National Forest and Game Preserve. According to the September 6 edition of the *Lawton Constitution* the companies for these three camps would probably come from the Rocky Mountains. The U.S.F.S. expected the additional camps to remain in the Wichitas during the winter, greatly increasing the C.C.C. work capacity in the Preserve (More Youths, 1933; Will Establish, 1933).

Definite approval for two additional camps in the Wichita Mountains came on September 19. Congressman Johnson advised of the construction of winter quarters for the two new camps and the existing camp at Buffalo Springs. By September 28 the Army finished collecting bids and awarded a \$22,435 construction contract to Sikes and Ingle Construction of Chickasha, Oklahoma. The contract required the company to build the winter quarters for the two new camps. Work began on October 11. The company built "six barracks measuring 20 x 112 feet, a mess hall measuring 20 x 105 feet, a recreation hall and officers quarters" (Chickasha Firm, 1933, p. 1) for each of the two new camps (Chickasha Construction, 1933; Chickasha Firm; Definite Approval, 1933; Quarters Will, 1933).

By October the U.S.F.S. confirmed that the two new companies that would occupy the new camps were primarily made up of native Oklahomans then stationed in Colorado. The C.C.C. ordered Company 870, then stationed at Tabernash, Colorado, and

Company 859 from Dillon, Colorado to the new Wichita Mountains camps for the winter. While on an inspection stop in the Wichitas, Regional Forester Peck stated that the U.S.F.S. had stationed these young Oklahoma men in camps at the timberline in the Colorado Rockies. They had acclimatized to the altitude and were “regular mountaineers” (Allotments to, 1933; Peck Inspects, 1933).

Company 859 moved into their new winter quarters in the Wichitas, Camp F-5, on October 1, 1933. The C.C.C. named Camp F-5 Panther Creek after the stream running near the site. Panther Creek took its name from stories that the last panthers in the Wichita Mountains lived along its banks (Meredith et al., 1978b; National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1934a). Meredith et al. recorded

Settlers often heard the cries of panthers from there. Hunters and trappers formed big hunts and went out to get the beast, or beasts, and succeeded in at least quieting the fears of the settlers. Thereafter, the little stream was called Panther Creek. (1978b, p. 6)

The young men of Company 870 first occupied Camp F-4 on November 17, 1933. Camp F-4, named Elm Island by the C.C.C., was once the site of a campground and picnic area. Located south of the present day Treasure Lake Job Corps site, the camp lay on an island at the headwaters of West Cache Creek. Shaded by elm trees, Company 870 continuously utilized this camp through 1941 (Company 870, undated; Meredith et al., 1978b; National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1934a).

### **Military Involvement**

Captain Fariss became the initial commander of the first C.C.C. camp established in the Wichita Mountains, Camp F-2, Buffalo Springs. His executive officer was First Lt.



G.E. Wrockloff of the 18<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery. First Lt. Fred Rueb, U.S. Army Medical Corps, was the camp's first medical officer. In keeping with early C.C.C. policy, the Army staffed the C.C.C. camps with limited numbers of regular service enlisted men. Fort Sill's 29<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Supplied C.C.C. Company 812 with a sergeant, two corporals, and a private. These enlisted personnel worked in support of the camp officers (Company 812, undated; Supervisor Of, 1933; Wichita Work Camp, 1933; Youths Are, 1933).

The U.S. Army quickly instituted a program of reserve officer rotation through C.C.C. camp commands. Camp Buffalo Springs's Army officer roster provides a typical example of this rotating nature. The first officers assigned to Camp F-2, Buffalo Springs, did not remain long. Captain Richard C. Prater, 16<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery, replaced Captain Farris as camp commander on July 12, 1933. An infantry reserve officer, First Lt. Dudley Turner, replaced Lt. Wrockloff as executive and mess officer on September 19, 1933. He held this station until relieved of duty on April 15, 1934. Infantry Reserve First Lt. Ross O. Sare replaced Turner. The final camp commander and executive officer to serve in the camp before Company 812's permanent transfer from the Wichita Mountains to Colorado in 1935 were respectively J.W. Evans, First Lt. Engineers Reserve, and Maynard J. Bonesteel, Second Lt. Infantry Reserve (Company 812, undated; National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1934a; 1935a).

This rotation system created a hardship for some reserve officers. After 8 months of C.C.C. service, the Army forced the officers to return to civilian life. In April 1936, First Lt. Jewel Clyde White, Infantry Reserve, a former officer with Company 870

requested Senator Thomas's help in securing a reappointment to the C.C.C. Lt. White wrote of his reasons for seeking assistance from Thomas. "Unemployment and a birth and a death in my immediate family prompt me to write this letter and request your help in securing this re-detail" (White to Thomas, 1936). Senator Thomas dutifully forwarded Lt. White's request to C.C.C. Director Fechner and 8<sup>th</sup> Corps Army Headquarters with meager results. Thomas informed White that in order to obtain a new detail with the C.C.C. that the District Commander had to make the request (Thomas to Commanding General, 1936; Thomas to White, 1936).

The Wichita Mountains C.C.C. commanding officers regularly experienced varied types of trouble. On April 3, 1936, a near tragedy in the Panther Creek camp occurred. At 1:30 AM fire destroyed the officer's quarters. First Lt. H.J. Kaplin narrowly escaped by climbing through a window. First Lt. O.T. Cox, Camp Commander, and S.H. Streeter, Camp Superintendent, were not present in camp at the time of the fire (Officer Escapes, 1936).

Problems of a different nature were brewing in Camp Elm Island in 1936. Conflict between the Army camp administration and the technical service became open and heated. As a result of a special investigation, the C.C.C. named both Captain Miller, the camp commander, and Edwin Hackenburg as negligent in allowing foul "joking and kidding" and cursing to occur regularly. He found that the Army and technical service men also took advantage of their positions of power in the mess hall. The supervisors "were served special foods such as choice cuts of meat and dainties not served on the regular table of the enrollees." In addition, both the Army and the technical service

members used whiskey in the camp “most disadvantageously.” Special Investigator Billups reported

Captain Miller now realizes some of his deficits...that such language as has been allowed has no place in a CCC organization; that we are in no class with construction gangs; that we stand for certain ideals that must be incorporated and considered and worked for in our organization. (Billups to McEntee, 1936)

Militarization of the C.C.C. was a contentious issue through the entire history of the Corps. Throughout the period of early C.C.C. involvement in the Wichita Mountains, the U.S. Army maintained a position of public denial of military training in the camps. At a February 24, 1934, meeting of the Lawton Chamber of Commerce, Captain J.A. Wallace, the quartermaster officer in charge of supplying the Oklahoma C.C.C. camps, spoke of the role of the Army in the C.C.C. While informing the Lawton civic leaders of the Army’s administrative role in each camp, he made plain the fact that no military training was occurring in the Wichita Mountains (CCC Explained, 1934).

Changes in U.S. opinion of the topic of military training in the nation’s C.C.C. camps began to become evident with the rise of totalitarian regimes in Europe. The December 6, 1938, edition of the *Lawton Constitution* recorded the first U.S. Army call for the militarization of the camps since the early days of the Corps. Major General Albert H. Blanding, the National Guard Bureau Chief, stated that the militarization of the C.C.C. would allow for a much stronger Army Reserve program. He argued

1. There was little talk of a general European war when the CCC proposal was first projected and rejected and the need of this country for trained reserve is much greater than it was several years ago.

2. European nations make military training of their youth compulsory.
3. If war broke out, the men who went through CCC training would have to go back into government camps to receive the same training they could begin now. To date 2,122,000 young men have been given CCC jobs. About 300,000 enroll in the agency each year. If all these men had been trained, this country would now have military reserves of about 3,500,000 men. (Army Training, 1938, p. 1)

Even though some proponents of the C.C.C. believed the American public was ready for a stronger military connection in the Corps, representatives of the Oklahoma C.C.C. Selection Office believed differently. On September 22, 1939, only weeks after the German invasion of Poland, J.L. Hill, Oklahoma State Supervisor of C.C.C. Selection denied the militarization of the C.C.C. Through this effort he hoped to stem the tide of unfilled C.C.C. enrollment quotas. Hill believed that the public's perception of forced enrollee conscription in case of war was the cause. He stated in an *Oklahoma City Times* article

There have been rumors that CCC boys would be the first to be inducted into the fighting forces in case the United States were involved in war...but we have been assured by the national director that there is no such plan afoot. In the event the United States were involved at a later date, the only way a CCC boy could be inducted into the army, navy or other fighting force unit would be through the normal channel he would go through if he were not a member of the CCC.

(National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1939b)

Hill further downplayed the Army's role in C.C.C. camp administration in Oklahoma.

There is no military training in the CCC, and its only connection with the army is that camps are run by reserve officers, in charge, and a representative of the department of interior or agriculture. The army takes care of the boys and the departments direct their work. (National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1939b)

On October 6, 1939, the State Office of Government Reports interviewed Hill on KTOK radio in Oklahoma City. Also carried throughout the state on the Oklahoma Mutual Network, the interview reinforced the point “that enrollees of the Civilian Conservation Corps are in no way connected with the nation’s fighting forces...”(National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1939b).

As the conflict in Europe intensified, the public became even more accepting of the militarization of the C.C.C. The May 30, 1940, edition of the *Lawton Constitution* reported on presidential action taken to utilize the C.C.C. as a means to enhance military preparedness. The article ran immediately opposite news of stunning German military successes against the retreating British and French armies in western France. F.D.R. sought congressional approval that would require C.C.C. enrollees to engage in training in “non-combat” subjects. Under the President’s plan

Young men desiring to enroll in the CCC in the future would be required to pledge themselves to accept training in such subjects as cooking, baking, first aid to the injured, operation and maintenance of motor vehicles, road construction and maintenance, photography, signal communications, and other matters incident to the successful conduct of military and naval activities. (Plan Expand, 1940, p.

1)

The military was quick to emphasize that the training was “strictly non-combatant.” The plan would not require an enrollee to enlist in the U.S. military (Plan Expand, p. 1). Even when the program went into effect, the C.C.C. was careful to downplay the military connection. In an August 1941, *Lawton Constitution* article announcing that the military would teach C.C.C. enrollees to march, Corps Director J.J. McEntee tempered the implications. He claimed the purpose of the marching instructions was “to ‘spruce up’ the appearance of the corps and give the enrollees the healthful benefits of marching with heads up...” (CCC Youths, 1941, p. 1).

### **Camp Life**

The C.C.C. provided immense portions of highly varied food to their enrollees. The young men of Camp Buffalo Springs were no exception to this practice. On March 9, 1934, the enrollees ate three square meals typical of those eaten by young C.C.C. men from all three camps throughout their time in the Wichitas. The breakfast menu as reported by the Mess Officer, Lt. Turner, included hot cakes, sugar, butter, fresh milk, wheat krispies, stewed prunes, and coffee. Beef pot pie, boiled turnips, cold slaw, bread-tea, and apple cobbler made up the dinner menu. The supper menu included roast beef, brown gravy, dressing, fried hominy, cold slaw, golden cake, bread, and milk (National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1934a)

A former Company 870 enrollee recalled enjoying the Camp Elm Island meals. He stated, “I though the food was good myself.” Even though he enjoyed the meals he remembered that not everyone shared his views. He claimed, “If you get a bunch of men together like that you’ve always got some radicals that said the food was no good or not fit to eat, but I thought it was good....It was just like the Army.” The former Elm Island

man praised the work of his company's mess sergeant stating, "it's not what the Army buys, it's how the mess sergeant and cooks mess it up" (Co. 870 enrollee a, personal communication, September 12, 2003).

The combination of nutritious food coupled with the working conditions of C.C.C. life changed the bodies of typical enrollees. During a Lawton Chamber of Commerce visit to Camp Buffalo Springs in January 1935, the *Lawton Constitution* recorded

These youths, who entered camp on first enlistment, undernourished, discouraged, with flabby muscles and jaded nerves, within a few weeks were developed into strong robust men, and the record shows that at the end of a six-months enlistment period each recruit has gained from 10 to 27 pounds in weight – the result of healthful exercise, climatic conditions, and nourishing food. (Lawton Group, 1935, p. 8)

C.C.C. men received special treatment on major holidays. On Christmas Day 1934 the Company 870 enrollees dined on cream of tomato soup, green young onions, sweet pickle relish, roast young turkey with chestnut and oyster dressing, celery, giblet gravy, mashed potatoes, candied sweet potatoes, boiled onions, buttered green peas, mashed turnips, cranberry sauce, hot graham rolls, butter, mince pie a la mode, mixed nuts, mixed candy, hot chocolate, and assorted mints. The young men topped off their meal with the provided cigars and cigarettes (National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1934a). On Thanksgiving Day 1937 the men of Companies 859 and 870 ate equally well. The *Lawton Constitution* recorded that in addition to their portion of the 40,000 turkeys purchased by the C.C.C. nationwide, the

Wichita Mountains enrollees would receive, “All the ‘Trimmins’ - oysters, celery, pickles, olives, lettuce, salads, vegetables, fruit cakes, mince pie, pumpkin pie, candies, fruits, coffee, cigarets [sic] and cigars” (County’s CCC, 1937, p. 1).

### **Medical Care**

C.C.C. medical officers rotated through service in various camps much as the military camp administration. Company 812 was typical in this regard. In the months after the founding of Camp F-2, Buffalo Springs, Lt. Rueb continued to serve as the Company 812 medical officer. First Lt. Jay F. Camel, U.S. Army Medical Reserve, replaced Rueb on March 1, 1934. The third and final camp surgeon to serve at Camp Buffalo Springs was a civilian, Harold G. Garwood. As a civilian contract physician, Garwood and his contemporaries served longer camp tenures than their military counterparts. Living in camp with the other officers, the medical personnel were kept busy throughout Company 812’s time in the Wichita Mountains. While in 1934 the camp physician checked the enrollees only periodically for venereal disease, by 1935 the checks were occurring monthly with kitchen help being examined semimonthly. The camp physicians also conducted well-attended courses in personal hygiene (Company 812, undated; National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1934a, 1935a).

These patterns of care giving, venereal disease checks, and presentation of educational programs characterized the medical program of the C.C.C. in the Wichita Mountains until the beginning of World War II. However, medical emergencies occasionally arose in the camps. In December 1934, an enrollee from Company 870 developed a case of diphtheria. The medical officer placed the entire camp under



quarantine. Although not affecting the work program, the weeklong quarantine prevented the young men from leaving camp for nearby towns and from receiving visitors in camp. Camp Commander R.H. Ware complained, “we can’t do our Christmas shopping, which is highly unpleasant at this time of the year” (CCC Camp 870, 1934, p. 2).

A similar, though more deadly, situation occurred in Company 859 little more than one year later. In January 1936, a Camp Panther Creek enrollee from Haskell, Oklahoma, died of spinal meningitis. One other infected C.C.C. man was receiving treatment at the Fort Sill post hospital. The quarantine restricted Company 859’s association with “outside parties” but did not affect the work program (CCC Enrollee, 1936, p. 1).

Tragedy struck the Wichita Mountains C.C.C. medical program in March 1935. Dr. Garwood, C.C.C. physician, died at Fort Sill. His last words were “I want to go with my boots on.” All three Preserve C.C.C. companies attended his open-air memorial service at Camp F-2, Buffalo Springs. Enrollees and officers presented several musical selections including “America” and “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” (Memorial Rites, 1935, p. 2).

As the C.C.C. program in the Wichita Mountains progressed, contract physicians replaced all military camp medical officers. At the time of Company 859’s transfer from the Refuge in 1938 a contract physician, J.M. Wilkerson, had served the camp for approximately four years. Dr. Wilkerson lived in Camp Panther Creek and served both Companies 859 and 870. After Company 859’s transfer from the Wichita Mountains, another contract physician took over as medical officer at Camp Elm Island. Dr. W.A.

Whiteside provided full-time medical services to the men of Company 870 as a resident in the camp (National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1934a, 1935a, 1936a, 1937a, 1938a, 1939a, 1940a, 1941a).

### **Camp Education**

The May 21, 1933, edition of the *Lawton Constitution* for the first time mentioned the C.C.C. education program for enrollees in the Wichita Mountains. The C.C.C. founded Camp F-2, Buffalo Springs before F.D.R. agreed in November 1933 to a standardized educational program for the camps. Therefore, no designated camp educational adviser was in place for Company 812's early months. However, the enrollees could engage in educational activities in the newly forming camp if they desired. The U.S.F.S. technical service employees would offer courses in forestry. The Army would teach vocational and general courses (Complete Welfare, 1933; Salmond, 1967).

By June 1934, Captain Maurice L. Cotton, former superintendent of Lawton and then superintendent of Altus Public Schools, was at work in the Wichitas as educational adviser for Company 870. The November 1934, Company 870 educational report indicated that Captain Cotton had organized a variety of courses and lectures for the enrollees in his charge. Course titles included spelling, business arithmetic, business English, bookkeeping, journalism, citizenship, history, Sunday school, current events, salesmanship, and first aid. Cotton, F. Goodpaster, a "special teacher," the military staff, and two enrollees taught the courses (Cotton Head, 1934; National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1934a).

Lectures presented to the Company 870 enrollees in the month of November 1934, also covered a wide range of topics. Majors Branham and Kilkenny, C.C.C. Chaplains, each presented a lecture to the young men of Camp Elm Island. Major Branham lectured on the “Invisible Things in Life”, while Kilkenny spoke of “Living a Full Life.” A physician told enrollees of the “Opportunities of Youth,” and two local dignitaries concluded the November Camp F-2 lecture series. R.H. Conwell, President of nearby Cameron University, presented a program entitled “Good Will” to the young C.C.C. men. Congressman Johnson explained the legislative process in a lecture he called “How laws are made” (National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1934a). Under Cotton’s supervision the Company 870 educational program enjoyed good attendance. In November 210 enrollees attended the first aid course and 125 engaged in other educational opportunities (Cotton Head, 1934; National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1934a).

Vocational education in the Wichita Mountains camps was of great importance as well. Clay Kerr, Company 859 Educational Adviser, stated “vocational guidance will become a factor in the ultimate solution of the unemployment problem” (CCC Educator, 1937, p. 2). Kerr, a former assistant state superintendent of education, developed a varied program of instruction for the young men of Camp Panther Creek. Courses offered in August 1937, included both academic and vocational opportunities. The classes included reading, spelling, writing, animal husbandry, auto mechanics, bookkeeping, cabinet making, cooking and baking, surveying, first aid, safety, and health. “On the job” courses included building construction, bridge construction, and road construction. The

course offerings reflected Kerr's belief in the effectiveness of vocational guidance (CCC Educator; National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1937a).

At Camp Elm Island Educational Adviser Cotton placed importance on academic success. In June 1938, 31 Company 870 enrollees graduated from the eighth grade. During the July 1938 Elm Island camp inspection Cotton listed several academic courses available to the young C.C.C. men including reading and writing, civics, spelling, writing, and public speaking. Camp BF-1, Elm Island, vocational courses offered in 1938 were carpentry, horticulture, journalism, painting, typewriting, auto-mechanics, radio-television, and band-string. During the same period Cotton assisted one enrollee in learning to read and write and six with finding jobs (County Youths, 1938; National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1938a).

Cotton seemed excited by the Camp 870 educational program's cooperative program with an area school. He wrote "Enrollees earned credits in near by high school – Many have been inspired to do individual work along special lines" (National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1938a). Another New Deal work relief agency, the Works Progress Administration, contributed teachers to the camp's educational system. Cotton reported, "three WPA teachers have been secured – Each teacher has begun building his department; one in Shop work, one in English and Commercial work, and one in Music and Radio and Elementary work" (National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1938a). Again in May 1939, Cotton announced the success of his C.C.C. program's pupils. Company 870 graduated 32 enrollees from the eighth grade that year (32 Youths, 1939).

The C.C.C. replaced Cotton on September 22, 1939 with Glenn A. Leonard. (National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1939a). Later Wichita Mountains C.C.C. educational offerings tended to stress vocational over academic training. During the last yearly inspection of Camp Elm Island in March 1941, the educational adviser noted that academic offerings included only three courses: 8<sup>th</sup> grade review, reading and writing, and civics. Vocational offerings were far more numerous. They included first aid, motor vehicle operation, blasting, welding, carpentry, blue print reading, taxidermy, conservation of fish and wildlife, and typing. Even with the reduced number of academic offerings many Company 870 enrollees completed eighth grade requirements. In 1940, 26 young Elm Island men graduated from the eighth grade (National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1941a).

Even though the Camp Elm Island administration provided a quality educational program, many of the enrollees failed to participate. A Company 870 enrollee stationed at Camp Elm Island from 1939 to 1941 claimed, "We weren't much interested in education." He further stated that he never took an education course during his two years in the Wichita Mountains (Co. 870 Enrollee A, personal communication, September 12, 2003). Another Company 870 enrollee, serving from 1939 to 1940 recalled taking only one educational course, cabinet making, during his one and one half years at Camp Elm Island (Co. 870 Enrollee B, personal communication, September 24, 2003).

### **Camp Recreation**

In mid-May 1933, in the days leading up to the establishment of Camp Buffalo Springs, the *Lawton Constitution* gave area citizens a preview of Company 812's recreational program. Twice weekly motion pictures shown from truck mounted

projectors and an elaborate library system would provide entertainment for Wichita enrollees. The “traveling library” would stay in the camp for one month until it rotated with a library from another camp. Each rotating library contained between 150 to 200 books “properly balanced between fiction and non-fiction.” Local and national newspapers as well as a selection of “the better known” weekly and monthly fiction magazines would round out the camp’s recreational reading opportunities. Radios and ample amounts of stationary would be available to the young men. Competitive athletics would be another option for the enrollees in Camp Buffalo Springs (Complete Welfare, 1933).

By August 1933, the Camp F-2 had a stage constructed by the enrollees. The young men used it “for presentation of entertainment numbers, largely of their own making, and for athletic events.” It stood near the middle of the camp. A recreation tent stood at the eastern side of the camp. Equipped with “reading tables and various magazines and other reading material” the recreation tent provided a source of diversion for the men of Company 812 (Forest Army’s, 1933, p. 8).

By 1936, the C.C.C. had abandoned Camp Buffalo Springs, but Camps Elm Island and Panther Creek remained and saw recreational improvements. In August both camps had new reading rooms. The C.C.C. designed the reading rooms to exist separately from the recreation halls. The rooms provided the enrollees with a quiet space for reading the variety of materials the C.C.C. stocked their shelves with. The Corps equipped the rooms with “text books, worthwhile literature and a varied assortment of magazines and newspapers so that enrollees may keep up with current events” (County CCC, 1936, p. 3).

After the arrival of Companies 859 and 870 in late 1933, athletic contests between the three camps became commonplace. Company 812 enjoyed much success in these endeavors (CCC Camp No. 812, 1934; CCC Camp No. 812 Wins, 1934). After Companies 812 and 859 left the Refuge, Company 870 began to engage in athletic contests with area teams. In May 1939, the young men of Camp Elm Island began play in the Lawton softball league (CCC Team, 1939; Doubleheader Softball, 1939).

Lawton organizations frequently held events for the C.C.C. enrollees in their town and in the camps. In June, 1935, Company 859 held a dance at the Lawton American Legion hut. Dancing would begin at 6:00 PM and ended at 11:00 PM. The young C.C.C. men had extended invitations to “a large number of Lawton girls” (CCC Camp Will, 1935, p. 1). December 1936, found the Cameron University student body performing their Christmas play for Company 859. The students put on the play, “A Sign Unto You” at Camp Panther Creek (Aggie Students, 1936, p. 3). In February 1937 the Comanche County Singing Convention presented their vocal program to the young men of Company 870 at Camp Elm Island (County Singers, 1938, p. 2).

During the last years of C.C.C. involvement in the Wichita Mountains the enrollees enjoyed a variety of recreational activities. In 1940 the Camp Elm Island men enjoyed a weekly motion picture. The camp financed the movies with a forty cent monthly charge paid by each enrollee. Two nights per week interested enrollees traveled nine miles to a gymnasium to practice basketball. Summer activities popular in 1940 included baseball and softball. The C.C.C. provided the Camp Elm Island recreation hall with a variety of other recreational equipment including dominos, checkers, Chinese checkers, ping pong, pool table, radio, and piano. In 1941 the C.C.C. added weekly

recreational trips to the camp's leisure offerings (National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1940a, 1941a). During the warmer months Company 870 men also enjoyed walking the one-quarter mile from Camp Elm Island to Sunset for a swim in the C.C.C. constructed pond (Co. 870 Enrollee A, personal communication, September 12, 2003).

### **Work Projects**

Upon arrival at the Buffalo Springs site on May 27, 1933, the young men of C.C.C. Company 812 found plenty of work. The enrollees spent their first days in the Wichitas engaged in constructing their new camp. The enrollees strove to organize the area, secure a water supply, and construct a bathing pool. Once work in the Preserve began the men would be expected to work 40 hours per week with time off for a noon meal and the requisite travel between camp and the work sites (Supervisor Of, 1933).

The first Company 812 work superintendent was E.R. "Ben" Powell. The U.S.F.S. transferred Powell, "an experienced forest camp superintendent" (Supervisor of, 1933) to Camp Buffalo Springs from the regional headquarters in Denver, Colorado. While Powell traveled from Denver to the Wichitas, Preserve superintendent French selected the U.S.F.S. technical supervisors and local experienced men for the camp (Company 812, undated; Supervisor of).

During their time in the Wichitas the young men of Company 812 completed many useful projects. The bulk of their time was spent in the completion of numerous water impoundments located throughout the Preserve. Under U.S.F.S. supervision the enrollees constructed several concrete dams creating equal numbers of new lakes in the Preserve. They included Deer Creek, Cut Throat, Panther Creek, Cow Creek, and Post



Oak. The Post Oak dam measured 100 feet long and 25 feet high. The young men also constructed numerous smaller earthen dams 50 to 100 feet long and six to eight feet high in order to create catch basins. The U.S.F.S. placed these water holes throughout the Preserve to provide water for wildlife in areas far from regular sources. Company 812 modified natural springs throughout the Wichitas. They piped the spring water to cement water tanks. The U.S.F.S. intended these tanks to also serve as water sources for the Preserve's wildlife (C.C.C. Builds, 1933; Company 812, undated; Deer Use, 1933; National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1934a, 1935a).

The Company 812 enrollees spent time working in a variety of other projects. Under the watchful eye of U.S.F.S. "expert fence builder" (Much Work, 1933, p. 1) A.H. Jones of Sterling, Oklahoma, the young men constructed 75 miles of the Preserve's steel boundary fence. The enrollees laid water lines for fire protection use. They also piped water to the newly constructed Preserve nursery. Company 812 built flood gates along the Preserve boundary. Other work projects included road and telephone line construction and rodent control (C.C.C. Builds, 1933; Company 812, undated; Much Work; National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1934a, 1935a).

By mid-November 1933, three C.C.C. camps were at work in the Wichita National Forest and Game Preserve. Companies 870 and 859 joined Company 812 in the work on a multitude of U.S.F.S. planned projects. The U.S.F.S. divided the winter work projects among the three camps. During the winter months Camp F-2, Buffalo Springs would be responsible for a number of work projects as described above, while the two newly arrived companies engaged in a number of new projects. The U.S.F.S. assigned the Camp F-4, Elm Island, enrollees to work projects in the area of Preserve

headquarters. According to the *Lawton Constitution* they would complete a headquarters construction project including

Curbing, building of sidewalks and ramps, two small dams in West Cache creek and other improvements. The Buffalo corrals will be completely reconstructed. Sunset Dam, formerly known as the Bathtub, will be constructed on Headquarters creek near the proposed Elk mountain camp ground. This dam will be approximately 10 feet in height. A truck trail up Elk mountain is planned. (Big CCC, 1933, p. 2)

The young men of Camp F-5, Panther Creek, would engage in a number of water management projects during the winter months.

A revetment project will be undertaken in the Post Oak area. A dam will be constructed in Wild Horse Canyon and clearing work will be done in Blue Beaver basin. About one-half of the way trails originally scheduled have been completed and the balance will be undertaken soon as possible. A number of earthen dams, similar to those being constructed by camp F-2 will be built. (Big CCC, 1933, p. 2)

All three camps would engage in several common projects during the winter.

Forestry projects were a major concern. One tree project involved the planting of cottonwoods, willows, and assorted hardwoods near the Preserve reservoirs in February and March. The enrollees would plant pecans, walnuts, junipers, and eastern red cedars in “favorable locations” throughout the area. “Timber stand improvement” would constitute a major project for the young Corps men. The C.C.C. would thin existing stands of osage orange, honey locust, and cedar. All “suppressed and diseased trees”

would be removed as well as others in order to ensure “proper spacing” in the groves (Big CCC, 1933, p. 2).

During the six months that all three C.C.C. camps would work in the Preserve the enrollees would engage in significant wildlife habitat improvement. The U.S.F.S. planned to use C.C.C. labor to plow several 10-acre plots located throughout the region. The plots would be sown to “suitable game feeds” for the benefit of the wildlife of the Wichitas. The enrollees would also fence these “game fields” (Big CCC, 1933, p. 2).

By the March 1934 camp inspections the three Wichita C.C.C. companies had completed much of their assigned winter work. In a March 14 letter to Director Fechner regarding his recent inspection C.C.C. Special Investigator M.L. Grant noted

This is a very beautiful natural park and the camps are doing some exceedingly fine work at this point. The terrain of the park lends itself remarkably well to this type of work and beautifying and improvement that the camps are doing.

He further commented that the enrollees’ work would provide far-reaching benefits.

Located as it is, it is accessible to this entire part of the state, northern Texas and southern Kansas, and in my opinion the money spent on this national park [sic] will go down as a credit to the C.C.C. and will afford pleasure and recreation to a great many thousands of people who might not be able to get it otherwise.

(National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1934a)

While standard C.C.C. enrollees received \$30 per month for their efforts, U.S.F.S. technical supervisors received far more. By March 1934, the U.S.F.S. had promoted Ben Powell from his Company 812 camp superintendent position to general superintendent of all three Wichita companies. He drew the princely monthly salary of \$250. The C.C.C.

paid camp work superintendents Stephen C. Berry, William H. Brisbane, and Alvah E. Moody \$200 per month. The 12 technical foremen located in the three camps received from \$150 to \$166.66 per month for their efforts. Each camp's machinist foreman and blacksmith drew \$125 per month while the company clerks received \$100 (National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1934a).

Carefully selected enrollees served as assistants to the technical supervisors. The C.C.C. compensated these young men, called leaders and assistant leaders, at a higher rate than the regular enrollees' wage of thirty dollars per month. "The assistant leader drew thirty-six dollars a month and the leader drew forty-five dollars a month" (Co. 870 Enrollee A, personal communication, September 12, 2003). The bulk of these C.C.C. men led work crews in the field. In March 1934, Company 812 had 12 assistant leaders and five leaders assigned to work on projects in the Preserve. The company also assigned four assistant leaders and five leaders to various duties around the camp (Co. 870 Enrollee A, personal communication, September 12, 2003; National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1934a).

While expected to leave for summer projects in Colorado on April 15, 1934, the two camps designated to leave stayed in the Wichitas until late spring. On May 20, Companies 859 and 812 received orders to move to Colorado. The C.C.C. ordered Company 859 to leave for Tabernash, Colorado on May 28, while Company 812 would leave for Delta, Colorado on June 8 (Orders To, 1934; Two CCC Camps in Preserve, 1934). Congressman Johnson questioned C.C.C. Director Fechner's decision to remove the two camps. Fechner assured him of the return of the two companies after the completion of their summer work program in Colorado (Dam Program, 1934; Two CCC

Camps Will Return, 1934). In a letter to Johnson printed in the *Lawton Constitution*, Director Fechner stated

I regret very much that I could not comply with the request that you personally made to me in my office today to continue all of the CCC camps now located in the national forest area in Oklahoma in their present location throughout the summer. You have been so untiring in your efforts to secure CCC camps in your district and have shown such a keen personal interest in the work that was being accomplished by these camps that I have been glad to do everything that I possibly could to meet your wishes in these matters. (Two CCC Camps Will Return, 1934, p. 1)

By October Company 589 was back in Camp F-5, Panther Creek. In November Company 812 returned to the first camp in the Wichitas, Camp F-2, Buffalo Springs (CCC Company, 1934; Quarters For, 1934).

By the first anniversary of the founding of Camp Buffalo Springs in May 1934, the three C.C.C. camps had completed an impressive number of projects. In a full-page story the *Lawton Constitution* praised their work in the Preserve. In addition to the completion of the dam and grazing improvement projects discussed above, the enrollees finished

30 miles of fence, 19 miles of roads, 17 miles of foot and horse trails, 15 miles of telephone line, 22 acres landscaped or cleared, six corrals, two bridges, nine buildings and 3,498 miles of surveying. (Dam Program, 1934, p. 2)

The work program developed for the winter of 1934 was more ambitious than that undertaken by the three camps during 1933. Under U.S.F.S. supervision the men of

Camp F-2, Buffalo Springs would strive to complete the boundary flood gates, and construct a dam west of the Post Oak dam. Built in a narrow canyon gap, the structure, West Post Oak Dam, would measure 48 feet high and 45 feet wide at the top. After completion of West Post Oak Dam, the enrollees would begin work on a new dam located on upper West Cache Creek. Other Company 812 winter projects included the construction of a series of dams creating fish culture ponds on West Cache Creek, the laying of water pipe, and the planting of trees. A detached crew of five enrollees would work to poison the Preserve's prairie dog population, while others assisted the forester with game studies. Enrollees would write reports and take motion pictures of the Preserve's wildlife species (Engineer For, 1934).

Winter projects assigned to Camp F-4, Elm Island, were equally diverse. The enrollees of Company 870 would also work primarily in dam construction. After finishing the Sunset Dam, the young men would begin work on the massive Lower West Cache Creek dam. This structure would measure 225 feet long and 28 feet high creating a lake of 50 surface acres. The Elm Island men would construct two campgrounds during the winter months. The proposed campsites were Sunset and Quanah Parker Lakes. Other Company 870 improvements scheduled for the lake included two 14 feet by 19.5 feet cobblestone bathhouses for each. Other Elm Island projects included replacing the telephone line to Cache, maintaining roads, grading and leveling work around the U.S.F.S. headquarters, and the clearing of timber from the West Cache Creek Reservoir site (Engineer For, 1934).

The C.C.C. engaged the men of Camp F-5, Panther Creek, primarily in dam construction work throughout the winter of 1934. Quanah Creek Dam, the first

undertaken, would be the largest project yet undertaken by the C.C.C. in the Wichitas. Measuring 48 feet high and 130 feet long, it would create an 817 acre lake. The enrollees would also construct two much smaller dams during the winter months. The Pecan Springs dam would measure only three and one-half feet high, while the Craterville Creek dam would stand 20 feet high and create a pond of eight acres. The U.S.F.S. expected winter C.C.C. work in the Preserve to proceed at a much faster pace than the previous year, as the young men were more experienced. They fully expected the C.C.C. to complete the entire list of winter projects during the six month winter season (Engineer For, 1934).

On February 24, 1935, a Lawton Chamber of Commerce delegation including several of the men that had worked so hard to secure the camp two years previous including members Keegan, Gartrell, and Reed visited Camp F-2, Buffalo Springs. The group was greatly impressed with the quality of work conducted by the C.C.C. in the Wichita Mountains. The *Lawton Constitution* reported their feelings.

The CCC's are constructing large and small dams which will impound water covering thousands of acres of ground, providing free fishing and bathing facilities for half-a-million people, providing water for game and as beautiful camping grounds as can be found in the nation. The CCC's are constructing good roads making available practically every beauty spot on the reserve, making innumerable trails, and clearing away the underbrush and stones which formerly impeded views from the highways. The CCC's are establishing lines of communications with the outside world, or will shortly be engaged in this work. (Lawton Group, 1935, p. 8)

Supervision of C.C.C. work projects in the Wichita Mountains underwent a major change in 1935. The newly formed U.S. Department of Biological Survey took over management of the Wichita Mountains from the U.S.F.S. in October 1935. The January 30, 1935, issue of the *Lawton Constitution* announced that the Biological Survey called Harry French, recently transferred by the U.S.F.S. to the San Isabel National Forest near Pueblo, Colorado, to duty as the new superintendent of the Wichitas. Only two days previous the *Lawton Constitution* reported French's mandatory retirement from the U.S.F.S. He had passed the recently enacted mandatory U.S.F.S. retirement age of 62. The Biological Survey had no such rule. The management of the Wichita Mountains officially passed to the Biological Survey on April 1. The area became known as the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. French continued to serve in the Wichita Mountains until his final retirement on February 1, 1937. The Biological Survey replaced him with George E. Mushbach (French To, 1935; Harry H. French, 1935; Open House, 1938; Transfer of, 1935; Wichita Refuge, 1937).

Following the winter season, the C.C.C. transferred Company 812 from the Wichitas Mountains to Colorado for the summer 1935 work program. In Colorado the enrollees worked near the towns of Delta and Pueblo Camp. Company 812 never returned to the Wichitas and Camp F-2, Buffalo Springs, remained empty (Company 812, undated; National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1935a). On a positive note, the C.C.C. ordered Company 859 to remain in the Refuge. For the first summer since the C.C.C. program in the Wichita Mountains began, two companies, 859 and 870, would remain in the Preserve throughout the season (Cancel Order, 1935).



By July 1935, completion of the Blue Beaver dam drew near. Under the guidance of technical supervisor Edwin H. Hackenburg of the Biological Survey, 25 enrollees from Elm Island, now known as Camp BF-1, worked on the dam that would create Jed Johnson Lake. Throughout this period relations between technical service supervisor Hackenburg and the Camp Elm Island Army administration were strained. In addition, work project and camp irregularities became apparent. C.C.C. Special Investigator J.S. Billups conducted an investigation of camp conditions in August 1936. He found unacceptable conditions both in the camp and at the work sites. Hackenburg allowed cursing and other “joking and kidding...of rough gutter stuff that is found in construction camps” (Billups to McEntee, 1936, p. 2). While finding that Hackenburg’s work program record was one of “efficiency,” Billups noted that the technical supervisor was

A good superintendent so far as the actual superintending of the work projects is concerned. He lacked the vision of seeing that this is a double program; that it is our desire to give these enrollees proper training. He focused solely on the work and saw no good in the other side. (Billups to McEntee, p. 2)

In October 1938, the Biological Survey promoted Hackenburg to regional C.C.C. inspector. In this new position Hackenburg was responsible for all C.C.C. work on Biological Survey lands in Louisiana, Arkansas, New Mexico, Texas, and Oklahoma (Billups to McEntee, 1936; Blue Beaver, 1935; Fechner to Thomas, 1936; National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1936a; Regional CCC, 1938).

In the nearly two years between the transfer of the Wichita Mountains from the U.S.F.S. to the Biological Survey and the fourth anniversary of the founding of the

C.C.C. in April 1937 the Corps completed numerous work projects in the area. The *Lawton Constitution* reported during the two-year period

Their efforts have resulted in the construction of nine foot bridges, one vehicular bridge, two bathhouses, five dwellings, and seven other buildings. They have also partly completed four other structures including shelters, dwellings, and miscellaneous outhouses. Seven dams were constructed by the camps and on three more the work is in progress. They built 430 rods of fence, laid 7,970 linear feet of pipe and tile lines. They cleared the way for and constructed 30 miles of truck trails, eight miles of foot trails, and another four miles of horse trails....Clearing up of 81 acres of land for a reservoir site and the further general improvement of another 32 acres. The boys did an even 20,000 square yards of fine grading, cleaned up 329 acres of channel. They moved and planted 1,620 trees and seeded and planted to food and cover for wildlife still another 41 acres. (Wichita Refuge CCC, 1937, p. 2)

Other projects undertaken by Companies 859 and 870 during the past two years included the construction of monuments, markers, signs, portals, cattle guards, power lines, and disposal beds. Dr. Ira N. Gabrielson, Biological Survey Chief, stated that this C.C.C. work

Is part of the restoration of our American wildlife. An invaluable resource of great benefit to all Americans. The next time you may see a thin line of geese honking their way along a flyway, or see shaggy buffaloes lined against the horizon [sic] perhaps you will say to yourself, "Well, it may be that I am able to

see these things because the CCC boys have been doing a good job down at the Wichita refuge.” (Wichita Refuge, 1937, p. 2)

By the fifth anniversary of the C.C.C. in April 1938, the Corps had completed many more improvement projects in the Refuge (Open House, 1938; U.S. Wildlife, 1938). Dr. Gabrielson listed the highlights of C.C.C. work accomplished in the Wichita Mountains since Company 812’s arrival in 1933.

Forty-six concrete dams, 14 rubble masonry dams, 3 large earthen dams, 50 miles improved roads, 46 miles big game fencing, 8 campgrounds, 20 miles fire breaks, 9 concrete bridges, 4 deep wells, 350 fish shelters, 25 wildlife food plots, 60 water gate structures, 5 residences, 1 laboratory, 1 warehouse, 1 community house, 23 other buildings, 1 hydroelectric system, 8 miles telephone line, 3 miles power line, 10,000 trees and shrubs planted, 6 miles foot trails, 15 springs developed. (Open House, p. 2)

Other work in the Refuge during 1938 involved the repairing of trees damaged during an ice storm the past winter. Enrollees gave wound closing “first aid” to over 1,100 pecan, walnut, juniper, oak, elm, and miscellaneous trees throughout the Wichita Mountains (CCC Workers, 1938, p. 8). While Chief Gabrielson noted the C.C.C. had completed many projects in the Wichita Mountains, much work remained for the young men of Companies 859 and 870 (Open House).

On the sixth anniversary of the C.C.C. in April 1939, most of the dam construction work had ended. Company 870, the only C.C.C. company remaining in the Wichitas by 1939, worked throughout the year on many projects. They included a major tree planting effort, the construction of a bridge spanning West Cache Creek, and the

elimination of bag worms from Refuge cedar trees (CCC Crew; 1939; CCC To, 1939; 9,000 Trees, 1939). The Camp Elm Island, now known as Camp BS-1, work program for fiscal year 1939 – 1940 included boundary and interior game fencing projects, fire break construction projects, road and truck trail construction projects, campground construction projects, and well digging projects (National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1939a). A former Company 870 enrollee remembered the physical nature of this work. Speaking of his experience during this period he stated, “we dug post holes, unrolled wire, put it up, stretched it...we dug garbage pits at campsites, we helped build roads” (Co. 870 Enrollee A, personal communication, September 12, 2003).

In one of the last major structural projects undertaken by the C.C.C. in the Wichita Mountains, the young men of Company 870 constructed a massive native stone lookout tower near Jed Johnson lake (Lookout Tower, 1940). Jed Johnson’s brother Ira, a junior foreman at Camp Elm Island, supervised part of the tower project (Co. 870 Enrollee A, personal communication, September 12, 2003; National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1940a). By July 1941, the C.C.C. had devoted Company 870’s enrollees to defense work at Fort Sill (CCC Company is, 1941).

One common project shared by all three companies throughout the entire period of C.C.C. involvement in the Wichita Mountains was fire suppression and prevention. Only a few months after their arrival in camp, in a typical fire-fighting episode, the Buffalo Springs enrollees battled a potentially major grass fire. On August 25, 1933, the U.S.F.S. used 150 of the young C.C.C. men to bring a 100-acre blaze under control. Several enrollees monitored the fire site, located three miles northwest of the Buffalo Springs Camp, for rekindling throughout the night (Close Watch, 1933). Until the

closure of the last Wichita Mountains camp, Camp Elm Island, with the onset of World War II, enrollees fought wild fires throughout the Wichita Mountains in areas including Lake Elmer Thomas, Mt. Scott, Lake Rush, and Lake Quanah Parker (Flames Damage, 1941; Little Damage, 1938; Range Fire, 1939; Refuge Fires, 1938; Smokers Warned, 1939).

In an effort to curb the spread of grass fires, the C.C.C. enrollees graded miles of firebreaks around the Refuge boundary. The enrollees also constructed fire roads designed to provide access to fire suppression teams (Fireguards Being, 1938). During fire seasons these fire suppression teams were made up of entire barracks of C.C.C. men. A former Company 870 enrollee recalled that each month, “one weekend you were restricted to camp, you couldn’t get a pass, in case they had a fire in the Refuge or a fire in the camp. The barracks you were in was restricted to camp” (Co. 870 Enrollee A, personal communication, September 12, 2003).

When called upon, the C.C.C. enrollees of the Wichita Mountains served in a wide variety of search and rescue capacities. In August 1934, 100 Wichita Mountains enrollees helped recover the body of a 13 year old boy drowned in Lost Lake (Youth Drowns, 1934). The enrollees of Camp 870 even attempted to rescue a “small black and white Spitz-mongrel pup.” The pup, named Bunk, became trapped 20 feet underground in a crevice on the western side of the refuge. For three days Refuge staff members and 20 Company 870 enrollees worked to free the dog with sticks, rods, crowbars, and, finally dynamite. Their efforts were to no avail. The *Lawton Constitution* reported “Alas! The final explosion killed Bunk. And the crevice where he was stuck became his grave” (Bunk Becomes, 1941, p. 1).

## Community Relations

Community involvement in the Wichita Mountains C.C.C. camps was strong from the beginning of the program. The founding of Camp F-2, Buffalo Springs in 1933 was largely due to the efforts of Lawton area business and civic leaders (Work Camp, 1933). Their interest in Company 812 remained strong in the years following the start of C.C.C. work in the Wichitas. From the beginning Lawton civic clubs showed a keen interest in the young men of Camp F-2 and their work projects. On June 1, 1933, Preserve Superintendent French and L.H. Douglas of the Denver U.S.F.S. office spoke at the Lawton Kiwanis Club meeting. After discussing cooperative arrangements between the Kiwanis Club, the Preserve, and the C.C.C., Douglas made an impression on club members by exhibiting "several types of snakes which inhabit the Wichitas" (Forrest Official, 1933, p. 2).

On August 27, 1933, the Rotary Club initiated the first of a series of weekly entertainment programs conducted for the enrollees in the Wichitas. Around 30 Rotarians and their associates presented a varied program for the young men of Company 812. Numerous Lawton men and women sang solos and duets. Some played violins and pianos, while others tap danced, whistled, and performed "novelty acts." The Kiwanians would present the next week's program at the camp (Interesting Program, 1933, p. 5).

Lawton civic club involvement in the Wichita Mountains C.C.C. camps continued throughout the remainder of the program. In July 1935, Company 870 hosted over 100 members and guests of the Lawton Kiwanis club for dinner and entertainment at Camp Elm Island (Kiwanis Club, 1935). Educational advisers Kerr and Cotton, from Companies 859 and 870 respectively spoke of their efforts at the Lawton Kiwanis club in

June 1938. As late as 1941 civic club involvement in the Wichita Mountains C.C.C. continued. The Lawton Jaycees took part in national "I Am An American Day" ceremonies at Camp Elm Island on May 20 (Jaycees Guests, 1941).

In the months following the establishment of Camps Buffalo Springs and Elm Island, Lawton business community interest in the Corps remained high. On February 25, 1934, Captain J.A. Wallace, the Ft. Sill purchasing and contracting officer, spoke at the monthly Lawton Chamber of Commerce meeting. Captain Wallace, in charge of "procuring and furnishing supplies to" the 36 C.C.C. camps in the state, told the civic leaders of the benefits of the Corps. The two major benefits of the C.C.C., Wallace stated, were to provide work for the unemployed and the value of the work itself, which, "may be considered as an extra dividend" (CCC Explained, 1934, pp. 1-2). The Captain promoted to the gathered business leaders the idea that the Corps provided economic benefits to the communities surrounding the camps. He stated

The camps have been of value to adjacent communities through expenditures made for subsistence and the spending of the men themselves... There are five camps in this immediate area, three in the Wichita National Forest, one at Rush Springs and one at Binger with approximately 1,000 men enrolled. The spending power of the men is around \$7,500 a month, while a considerable amount is spent by the government in maintaining the camps and for necessary services. (CCC Explained, p. 2)

The economic impact of the Wichita Mountains C.C.C. camps retained its importance throughout the program. In a full-page re-election ad in the July 7, 1940, edition of the *Lawton Constitution*, Congressman Jed Johnson declared his role in bringing \$4,080,000

in C.C.C. funds to Oklahoma as the fifth most important factor the voting public should consider in his re-election bid (Jed Johnson, 1940).

On February 24, 1935, the Lawton Chamber of Commerce visited Camp Buffalo Springs. The men of the camp treated them to dinner, entertainment, and a tour of the camp. The business leaders commented on the high morale of the Company 812 enrollees. The *Lawton Constitution* recorded

One of the most gratifying conditions found at the camp was the excellent morale of the men. In almost perfect health they appear contented and happy, and officers report there is very seldom any trouble experienced. Eagerness of workers to re-enlist at the expiration of their enlistment, is a sure indication that the men are satisfied with their lot. They cheerfully perform a fair day's work every working day and are treated with kindness and consideration. A visit to a CCC camp such as 812 provides the answer as to why the administration proposes to double these camps in number – the government not only builds morale and physical strength into unemployed young men, but secures material return upon its human investment. (Lawton Group, 1935, p. 8)

Following standard C.C.C. practice the Wichita Mountains camps hosted open houses each April in commemoration of the founding of the Corps. The April 1937 open house was typical. The enrollees of Camps Panther Creek and Elm Island were on hand to give hundreds of visitors tours of their camps and area work projects (Hundreds Will, 1937; Wichita Refuge CCC, 1937). The April 1938 event was an expanded two-day affair consisting of the standard camp and work project tours (Open House, 1938). By 1939 the Wichita Mountains open house event had grown to a C.C.C. "Visitors Week"



complete with tours, music and refreshments (“Visitors Week,” 1939, p. 1). By 1940 the open house week became so popular that Camp Elm Island administration expected 2,500 visitors. The celebration required one month of preparation work by the enrollees (CCC Camp Awaits, 1940; CCC Camp Host, 1940). The April 1941, Company 870 open house was much smaller than the previous few years. Camp Elm Island would be open for public inspection for only one day (CCC Camp To Be, 1941).

### **The Camps Close**

Camp Buffalo Springs closed in 1935 with Company 812’s transfer from the Wichitas to Colorado. While in Colorado the enrollees worked near the towns of Delta and Pueblo. Despite the political efforts of Senator Thomas, the camp never reopened (Company 812, undated; National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1935a). By spring 1936 the word spread that Company 812 was not returning to Camp F-2. On March 28, Senator Thomas received a Western Union telegraph from Lawton Chamber of Commerce member Gartrell stating that Camp F-2 was “urgently needed” and the other two Wichita camps “should be retained” (Gartrell to Thomas, 1936), Senator Thomas wrote C.C.C. Director Fechner asking him to reconsider the matter as

There is a great deal of work to be done in that vicinity and the camps have meant a great deal to that section. It would be appreciated if the work could be continued...the camp at Buffalo Springs has been removed, and I am wondering whether there is any possibility of having this camp reinstated. (Thomas to Fechner, 1936)

On April 7, Fechner replied to Thomas's request. He stated, "in reference to your suggestion to reoccupy the camp at Buffalo Springs: I regret to say that under present instructions from the President this will not be possible" (Fechner to Thomas, 1936a). The Office of Indian Affairs tore down Camp Buffalo Springs in January and February 1939. They used the salvaged materials to rehabilitate Indian Affairs structures at Anadarko and Fort Cobb, Oklahoma (Buffalo Springs, 1939; Refuge CCC, 1939).

Camp BF-2, Panther Creek closed during the summer of 1938 with little fanfare. The C.C.C. designated Panther Creek for closure on April 1, 1938. After a personal appeal to C.C.C. Director Fechner on March 20, Congressman Johnson stated Fechner assured him that the C.C.C. would not close Camp BF-2 before May 31 (CCC Camp to, 1938). The last reference to Company 859 in the *Lawton Constitution* occurred on July 15, 1938 (67 CCC). J.C. Reddoch conducted the final Camp Panther Creek inspection on July 7, 1938, finding deteriorating camp structural conditions (National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1938a).

Camp BS-1, Elm Island, was the last of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge C.C.C. camps to close. By July 1941, the men of Company 870 were at work on defense projects on Fort Sill. The military transported the enrollees from Camp Elm Island to Fort Sill and back each day (CCC Company Is, 1941; Wichita Mountains, 1941). Further references to the closure of Camp Elm Island were not found in the *Lawton Constitution*. The events leading up to the United States entry into World War II dominated the headlines. On October 13, 1941, the *Clinton Daily News* reported that the Clinton, Oklahoma C.C.C. camp, Camp SCS-5, would receive 60 enrollees from the Cache,

Oklahoma camp. According to the article, Camp Elm Island would disband on October 30, 1941 (Local CCC, 1941).

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## CHAPTER IV

### **The Civilian Conservation Corps in Quartz Mountain State Park: Company 2810, Camp SP-16**

#### **A C.C.C. Camp at Quartz Mountain**

During the early years of the Civilian Conservation Corps program many park planners, due to the sudden, massive availability of Corps labor, fell victim to what National Park Service Rocky Mountain District Supervisor, Herbert Maier, called the “By guess and By God method of recreational planning” (1938, p. 31). By waiting to begin state park development until 1935, two years after the creation of the C.C.C., Oklahoma was able to avoid many mistakes made by other states in the construction of their parks. Oklahoma’s original seven C.C.C. constructed state parks are widely admired and compare favorably with C.C.C. park projects undertaken in federal areas including Yosemite and Yellowstone. The Oklahoma state park system placed high priority on the spatial equality of park placement (Maier, 1938; Smith, 2002). As the first Director of Oklahoma State Parks, A.R. Reeves, stated in 1938, “we are working and developing...State Parks so located that we have a State Park within 75 miles of 60 percent of the population of the State (1938a, p. 51). Speaking at the same 1938 conference, Maier made an identical statement. In addition, he claimed that placing these Oklahoma parks equitably was, “not easy in a state in which the bulk of the forest, hills, and streams are located in one-half of the State” (p. 30).

With Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s presidential inauguration in March 1933, came new hope for the people of depression wracked southwestern Oklahoma. After the

September 1933, announcement of the establishment of three southwestern Oklahoma C.C.C. camps including one in the nearby Wichita Mountains (Will Establish 3, 1933), Altus area groups began lobbying for one of their own. The Altus American Legion Post contacted Oklahoma Seventh District Congressman J.V. McClintic and Senator Elmer Thomas expressing their wishes for a Jackson County C.C.C. camp. While acknowledging the need, the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture's chief forester advised the group that no further C.C.C. camps would be established in the seventh congressional district at that time (Camp Location, 1933).

The intended location for the sought after C.C.C. camp was Lake Altus. The City of Altus owned lake, completed in 1927, provided water for area residents (\$700,000 Worth, 1935; Staufer, 1946). This 12,000 acre impoundment of the north fork of the Red River became an important recreation resource for area residents. The City of Altus stocked the lake with fish and began to develop the area as a park. Rugged granite peaks and outcroppings surrounded the lake (Reeves, 1938b; Staufer). According to Reeves this relatively undisturbed area was home to "practically the only tree and plant growth in that section of the state" (1938b, p. 6).

The July 1, 1934, issue of the *Altus Times-Democrat* recorded the first indication of probable C.C.C. camp establishment in the Altus area. The two potential campsites were the Altus city reservoir and Lake Altus. Proposed improvements at both the city reservoir and Lake Altus involved the construction of, "roads, bridges, trails, and public buildings." Covering 2,500 acres, the Lake Altus project was described by conservation engineer W.C. Burnham as a future "outing and recreational center...of prime importance to the new program to be launched by the federal government." The city reservoir park



was to cover 260 acres, 17 of which was donated by Altus pioneer George D. Pendelton. Congressman McClintic stated that each camp would receive \$19,500 for camp construction with an additional \$22,000 provided by the federal government for housing programs. These funds would support the construction of 15 buildings at both locations. The proposed camps met with approval from state forester George Phillips, Maier, and district Emergency Conservation work supervisor H.H. Carnell. The camps awaited only final federal approval (C.C.C. Camps, 1934, p. 1).

While awaiting federal approval for a C.C.C. camp, planning and construction for the Lake Altus park project went forward (Lake Altus Camp, 1934; Swimming Pool, 1934; Workmen Begin, 1934). The first federal work relief agency to engage in work at the Lake Altus Park was the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. The July 6, 1934, *Altus Times-Democrat* reported an updated list of “tentative” park amenities to be constructed by F.E.R.A. workers. The proposed improvements included: a swimming pool, a road circling the lake, a community house, a low water bridge below the dam, general park facilities, and a, “cleanup of the area” (Work on Lake, 1934, p. 1).

F.E.R.A. work on the Lake Altus project began on July 10, 1934, with 20 Jackson County and 40 Kiowa and Greer County men. These 60 men were busy clearing brush and “excavating for a swimming pool” (Workmen Begin, 1934 p. 1). The swimming pool, planned to measure 130 feet long by 70 feet wide, was under construction 150 yards downstream of the dam. The recently proposed community house was planned to overlook the lake from its position on a cliff above the swimming pool (Swimming Pool, 1934, p. 1).

J.C. Hathaway, F.E.R.A. foreman, planned a “stagger method” of work. Under this plan men from several surrounding counties would share relief work. The *Altus Times-Democrat* recorded that, “under the present plan, 26 workers from Jackson, Kiowa and Greer counties will work two weeks, then retire and allow 20 workers each from Tillman, Harmon and Washita counties work two weeks” (Workmen Begin, 1934 p. 1). Officials stressed that the park project used only state relief funds with no effect on county relief funding levels (Work on Lake, 1934; Workmen Begin).

After two days of work the F.E.R.A. park project encountered a series of problems. The July 12, 1934, edition of the *Altus Times-Democrat* reported a possible delay in park work due to a conflict with adjoining property owners. Project engineer C.P. Burnham claimed that work would halt soon unless members of the Johnson estate, owners of property adjoining the park on the south, agreed to grant road easements (Lugert Project). By early August F.E.R.A. construction at the park ceased. Because of difficulty in securing the right of way, Altus city attorney P.K. Morrill planned condemnation action on the property. Although funds for “the swimming pool, bath house, and park” were set aside (Relief Activity, 1934, p. 1), no further mention of F.E.R.A. work at the Altus Lake site was found in the *Altus Times-Democrat*.

Early spring 1935 found renewed discussion of a potential C.C.C. camp at Lake Altus. The March 14 issue of the *Altus Times-Democrat* recorded the efforts of citizens from Kiowa, Greer, and Jackson counties as well as civic organizations from Hobart, Mangum, and Altus to secure C.C.C. involvement at Lake Altus. L.C. Chevront, of Roosevelt, described as, “one of Oklahoma’s leading exponents of conservation and sportsmanship” presented the park plans developed by Altus, Mangum, and Hobart to the

Oklahoma State Park commission. The plan called for the purchase of 40 acres on the west side of the lake. Chevront claimed, “the project is certain to be approved if the land can be secured” (Lake Altus Park, 1935, p. 1).

Apparent approval for the Lake Altus park came on April 12 at the Isaac Walton League of America’s thirteenth annual convention in Chicago. The announcement proclaimed the establishment of seven Oklahoma State Parks. The proposed sites included Quartz Mountain, Woodward, Fort Townsend, Spavina, Heavener, and two unnamed (Improvement of Parks, 1935).

The June 2, 1935, edition of the *Altus Times-Democrat* announced the official placement of a C.C.C. camp at Lake Altus. The National Park Service, State Park Division camp would host one of fifteen C.C.C. companies assigned to Oklahoma state and county parks. The new camp at Quartz Mountain was part of a national expansion program doubling the size of the C.C.C. to 600,000 enrollees. Other Oklahoma state parks to receive C.C.C. companies included “Canadian River Park at Woodward...Illinois Park at Tahlequah...Latimer State Park near Wilburton... McCurtain Park at Sherwood...Big Springs Park near Watonga...Cherokee Park at Cherokee...and Spavinaw Lake State Park near Spavinaw.... (Lake Altus to Get, p. 1)”

Conrad Wirth, National Park Service Assistant Director, was in charge of state park development throughout the nation. While Quartz Mountain park construction plans were not specifically announced, Wirth discussed several aspects of C.C.C. and N.P.S. cooperation in state park development in general, illuminating what potential Quartz Mountain State Park patrons could expect in terms of park amenities. Wirth stated that

Development of a state or county park in this program...calls for hiking and bridle trails and bridges, picnic areas, parking spaces, outdoor fireplaces, shelters, lookout towers, log cabin communities, a recreational lodge and concession buildings, places for swimming, boating and controlled fishing and water and waste disposal systems.

According to Wirth, these state parks would become havens for wildlife, as large portions of each property would be left unmolested. He claimed

Fundamental conservation of timberland and wildlife of every variety is strictly observed throughout the area and development plans are so arranged the much-used spots are conveniently accessible to each other and the majority of the tract is left in its natural state. Of course, the development plan...depends largely on the size, character and location of the area. Some will stand intense development and some must be devoted principally to conservation.

The June 2 article also clarified the working relationship between the C.C.C. and the N.P.S., State Park Division. Wirth stated that

This division cooperates with Robert Fechner, director of Emergency Conservation Work, and the park conservation and recreation authorities of the states. All work is personally supervised by the National Park Service project superintendents and foremen, educated and experienced in architecture, landscape architecture, engineering, recreational planning, conservation and the protection of wildlife (Lake Altus to Get, 1935, pp. 1-2).

By June 4 U.S. War Department representatives from Ft. Sill, Oklahoma, were present at Lake Altus. The War Department representatives met with a group of Altus

officials and Chevront, now described as a representative of the “national park service and state park department.” The group was busy deciding on a site for what was now described as “No. 177 CCC camp National Park Service”. Chevront stated that the probable location of the camp was the west edge of the lake.

For the first time specific C.C.C. park improvement plans for the area were discussed. Chevront stated that while the War Department would be responsible for the supervision of C.C.C. enrollees, they would be “loaned each day to the national park service” for park improvement projects. Under the supervision of National Park Service technical supervisor C.C. Cornell, the initial construction projects would include

A bridge...built across the North Fork river below the lake dam and roads...leading to the lake from all directions making the lake easily reached from all parts of the district. Other improvements will be the building of stone camp houses for Boy Scouts, Camp Fire Girls, and stone tables for persons visiting the lake and park on outing trips.

The park would be built upon donated lands. Altus and “other cities” donated the area for the estimated 750 acre park to the state (Will Establish CCC Camp, 1935, p. 1).

Demographically the Quartz Mountain park was badly needed. Oklahoma Division of State Parks Director A.R. Reeves noted as much in *The First Annual Report of the Division of State Parks*.

It is ideally situated to serve ten important communities; namely, Hobart, Lone Wolf, Granite, Mangum, Altus, Frederick, Blair, Hollis, Snyder and Roosevelt. These cities do not have any recreational areas available. This park will serve an area of approximately 100 miles in each direction from the park, a section of the

state where there are no other large parks or recreational facilities available. For this reason this park provides one of the most important links in the State Parks system.

Reeves further stated

The population in the surrounding 50 miles is 226,504. It is felt that 80% of this population will avail themselves of this Park's facilities and possibly 60% of the population of the adjoining 50 miles will also utilize the park. The Division of State Parks is very happy to be able to make available so badly needed recreational facilities to so large a number of Oklahoma citizens (1938b, p. 6).

While the *Altus Times-Democrat* agreed with Reeves that the park was needed to, "provide a recreation center for the people of Southwest Oklahoma" they further declared the relief value of the project. The camp would "provide employment for 200 needy young men who are unable to find employment in civilian life" (Plateau Will, 1935, p. 7).

On June 6 the western side of Lake Altus was officially designated as the site for the new C.C.C. camp. The 12 acre camp would be located in "section 22-5n-20w" on land donated to the state by the City of Altus. Ft. Sill Captain C.O. Harrison selected the site with the assistance of Colonel H.G. Shaw of Ft. Sill and work supervisor Cornell of the N.P.S. Captain Harrison announced the opening of bids for barracks construction material (CCC Campsite, 1935, p. 1).

Attempting to capitalize financially on the new camp, the City of Altus and the Altus Chamber of Commerce announced plans to construct a temporary low water crossing over the North Fork of the Red River. This crossing would allow vehicles from Altus to enter the camp without traveling through Hobart or Mangum. Carrol Spangler,

director of the Chamber of Commerce, stated, “this plan was made so that Altus, which is putting up a large portion of the land and money for the camp, may benefit from it directly” (Altus Aids, 1935, p. 1). By early July the crossing was complete (Camp to Open, 1935; River Crossing, 1935).

By late June conflict with the Johnson estate, still the owners of the proposed C.C.C. camp site once again delayed action. Under a cooperative agreement the cities of Mangum, Hobart, and Altus had agreed to pay the Johnsons three-quarters of the purchase price of the campsite with the state purchasing the final one-quarter. However, due to high appraisal value, the “state game and fish department” declined to purchase the 48 acre plot. Chevront claimed that the \$3,600 value assessed by District Judge John Wilson was “too high” (Camp to Open, 1935, p. 1; CCC Camp Still, 1935, p. 1). In the final resolution of the camp land purchase dispute, the August 11 issue of the *Altus Times-Democrat* reported that, “24 or 25 acres” of land from the Johnson estate had, “recently been condemned and appraised for use in the park” (State CCC Camp, 1935, p. 1). The *Altus Times-Democrat* provided no further references to this topic.

In early July the state C.C.C. office opened bids for 20 Oklahoma C.C.C. camps, including Lake Altus. The bidding process closed on July 5 (20 CCC, 1935). Eager to begin, a group of Altus men under the supervision of Tom Elliot began clearing the campsite grounds. Simultaneously the contractor, Tom Forham, supervised the unloading of materials to be used in construction of the camp. The awaited opening of the low water crossing would allow the transport of the materials to the campsite. According to the July 8 edition of the *Altus Times-Democrat*, the site, located “940 feet northwest of the dam at Lake Altus, one-fourth mile south of the Boy Scout camp and

one-half mile east of the river road crossing below the dam,” would be home to a variety of structures.

Buildings included in the camp project include five barracks, each 20 by 104 feet, or sufficient to house 40 men each; a mess hall 20 by 140 feet with a 20 by 56 foot kitchen attached; a 20 by 100 foot welfare building, 20 by 96 foot storehouse building; 20 by 32 foot infirmary; 20 by 36 foot bath office; 20 by 72 foot headquarters house; 10 by 25 foot latrine; 20 by 25 foot garage and a 6 by 8 foot ice box.

The recently finalized contract required that construction be complete in 75 days (CCC Material, 1935, p. 1).

On July 8, with the completion of the low water crossing, construction work at the camp began (Bridge Across, 1935; Construction of Camp, 1935; Plateau Will, 1935). The winners of the \$20,000 War Department contract, the Tulsa Rig and Reel Company, worked rapidly through the remainder of July and into mid-August. Under the supervision of Tulsan Charles Robinson, 14 carpenters and six laborers from Altus, Hobart, Mangum, and other local towns constructed the camp (County CCC Men, 1935; Plateau Will, 1935; State CCC Camp, 1935; State Will Have, 1935). By August 18, with construction nearing completion, 100 Jackson county youths were enrolled for C.C.C. positions at the Quartz Mountain camp (County CCC Men, 1935).

After six weeks of construction, the camp buildings were completed and turned over to the government on August 20. The camp officially opened on August 22. The *Altus Times-Democrat* described the 12 camp buildings in detail.



The 12 buildings include five barracks each 20 by 104 feet in size, each of which will need to accommodate 40 enlisted men of the Civilian Conservation Corps, or a total of 200 men. Officers Quarters, 20 by 96 feet designed to accommodate 40 officers and technicians, who will direct the improvement work and have charge of the camp. Mess Hall 20 by 115 feet with a 30 to 24 foot wing in which the meals will be prepared and served to the men. Welfare and Recreation Building 20 by 100 feet, where the men will spend their leisure hours and where entertainment features will be presented for their benefit. Infirmary and Hospital, 20 by 32 where medical treatment will be given when necessary to preserve the health of the men. Headquarters and Supply Building, 20 by 72 feet, where will be located the offices and storerooms for supplies. Garage, to accommodate trucks and automobiles used by the company. Latrine, 20 by 50 feet.

Constructed of “regular stock lumber shipped from the yards of the Tulsa Rig and Reel company” the buildings appeared “substantially constructed” and of a “pleasing appearance” Looking to the future the *Altus Times-Democrat* further stated that these “well-constructed” buildings would be a valuable addition to the park after work was completed and the C.C.C. company had moved away (Plateau Will, 1935, p. 7).

While ultimately expecting a total of 200 enrollees, an initial, smaller group arrived from Jackson, Cotton, Harmon, and Tillman counties on August 22. By August 26, 174 enrollees were present at the camp. Upon arrival at the camp, the medical officer gave the young men physical examinations and vaccinations for typhoid and smallpox. Partially explaining the enrollee quota shortfall, thirty prospective enrollees failed the physical examination necessary to join the C.C.C. Camp officials, present at the site for

the previous week, stated that work on the park project would begin in about two weeks (CCC Camp at Lake, 1935; 174 Enrolled, 1935; 126 Men, 1935). The C.C.C. designated the group Company 2810 (National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1936a).

On September 8, the Oklahoma State Park Service named Chevront, described as “the moving genius in planning the park and handling the various details in connection with the project,” (Plateau Will, 1935, p. 7) the park superintendent of the “Quartz Mountain C.C.C. Park” (Chevront Is, 1935, p. 1). Chevront was the driving force behind the acquisition of the park land, the securing of a C.C.C. camp, and the initial planning of the park’s areas and facilities (Plateau Will, 1935). The superintendent’s nine assistants would include “engineers, superintendent of utilities, superintendent of construction, blacksmiths, and mechanics and other skilled workmen.” Other supervisory positions in the Quartz Mountain camp would include 14 local experienced men, and another 14 “key men” chosen from among the C.C.C. enrollees. These young men of previous experience and the ability to pass an examination would hold the titles of “leaders” and “assistant leaders” and serve as “clerks, cooks, and so forth” (174 Enrolled, 1935, p. 1).

### **Military Involvement**

In keeping with standard C.C.C. policy, United States military officers administered the Quartz Mountain camp. The first commander of the camp, officially known as Quartz Mountain C.C.C. Camp SP-16, was Lieutenant J. F. Bradley. Second in command was Lt. Neil D. Cox of Lawton (174 enrolled, 1935; Camp Will, 1935; National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1936). Lt. Cox

seemed to be pleased with his new position as executive officer of Company 2810.

Speaking of the recently completed camp he enthused, “this is one of the most beautiful camp sites and the best constructed camp I have ever seen” (174 Enrolled, p. 1).

On May 1, 1936, Second Lt. Robert L. Hardy United States Army Infantry Reserve, an Oklahoma City native, took command of Company 2810. A man with an avid interest in the lives of young Americans, the *Altus Times-Democrat* reported, “Lieutenant Hardy is trained for his job and a gentleman in every respect. He has been interested in boys all his life and has devoted much time to Boy Scout work” (Things Are, 1936). Hardy served in the camp until the C.C.C. transferred him to Camp SCS-5 in Clinton, Oklahoma. His replacement, First Lt. James H. Caruthers of the U.S. Army Quartermaster Reserve, transferred from the Wynnewood C.C.C. camp to take command of SP-16 (Caruthers New, 1937; National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1937). In early July 1937, Lt. Caruthers received a new junior officer. Emmitt F. Nettles, Second Lt. Infantry Reserve, remained attached to Company 2810 until June 1, 1938 (National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1937; Nettles Added, 1937). By 1938 First Lt. Herbert W. Rogers, Infantry Reserve, replaced Caruthers as camp commander. Rogers continued in this position until the transfer of Company 2810 from Quartz Mountain in 1939 (National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1938).

C.C.C. officials associated with Quartz Mountain State Park maintained a consistent record on the topic of military training in the camp. The August 25, 1935, edition of the *Altus Times-Democrat* reported that Quartz Mountain C.C.C. enrollees, though under the supervision of the Army while in camp, were not subject to military

discipline and would receive no military training. Speaking about enrollee discipline, camp officials told of “certain penalties” for minor offenses and potential dismissal from the C.C.C. for habitual violations of rules or disobedience to orders (Plateau Will, 1935, p. 7).

In a 1937 article announcing a Camp SP-16 open house commemorating the fourth anniversary of the founding of the C.C.C., Lt. Caruthers invited parents of enrollees and area citizens to the camp. The commander planned at least in part to convince them of the limited role of the military in the Quartz Mountain camp. The *Altus Times-Democrat* recorded Lt. Caruthers’s comments.

“We want to show people that this is not a military organization but a working group that has much to show for their time” Lt. Caruthers said. “There is no military training but the army is responsible for the feeding, medical care, paying and discipline of the boys.” (Altus Camp, 1937)

Jackson County C.C.C. selection officials also downplayed the military connection with the C.C.C. Following the September 1939, German invasion of Poland signaling the beginning of World War II in Europe, the Jackson County selection office increased the level of rhetoric. In the September 20, 1939 edition of the *Altus Times-Democrat* announcing the opening of the latest enrollment period for the Quartz Mountain camp Robert Fechner stated

There is no military training in the CCC and although there is war in Europe no official plans are afoot to inject military training into the corps; furthermore, should the United States be drawn into the war CCC enrollees could not be inducted into the fighting forces of the U.S. except as individuals under the same

circumstances as would apply to persons not members of the corps. (CCC Enrollment, 1939, p. 1)

The camp facilities proved useful for area military organizations. In mid-November, 1935, the new camp was host to a meeting of southwestern Oklahoma reserve officers from the communities of Weatherford, Clinton, Hobart, Elk City, Mangum, Hollis and Altus. Camp SP-16 officials organized the banquet and program. C.C.C. enrollees provided musical entertainment (Reserve Officers, 1935). Again in December 1937, reserve officers gathered at the camp for a "troop school." The officers were to study the "campaigns of the Civil War" (Officers Plan, 1937).

### **Camp Life**

During the first months of operation enrollees at the Quartz Mountain C.C.C. camp received ample amounts of good food (Camp Boys, 1936). The October 8, 1936, yearly inspection report provided a ten-day menu for the camp. On Tuesday October 6, a typical work day in the camp, the breakfast menu included stewed apricots, assorted cereals, fresh milk, white bread, corn syrup, syrup, coffee, and butter. At lunch the Company 2810 enrollees ate baked veal loaf, tomatoe aspic, mashed tomatoes, celery salad, white bread, cherry cobbler, and coffee. The supper menu included boiled lima beans with pork, boiled potatoes, pickles, sliced onions, corn bread, apple-butter, buttermilk, and butter.

Special Investigator Reddoch indicated that while the camp purchased some foods locally, the bulk came from the Army. He stated, "fresh fruits and green vegetables, cereals and salad dressings are bought on the open market. All other food supplies are bought from the quartermaster or on quartermaster contract." Reddoch ate a meal at the

camp during the inspection and gave it a “good” rating (National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1936). He reported similarly positive findings during the September 16, 1937, inspection (National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1937).

Camp administration treated Company 2810 enrollees to elaborate holiday meals. Thanksgiving 1936 was no exception. Not allowed to go home for the holiday, the enrollees enjoyed an elaborate meal. The *Altus Times-Democrat* recorded, “the menu reads: pepper pot soup, fruit salad, baked turkey, oyster dressing, cranberry sauce, candied sweet potatoes, buttered English peas, hot Parker house rolls, pumpkin pie, salted nuts and mints. Coffee was the drink.” After the meal the enrollees “were each to be passed a cigar so they could rear back in their chairs and top off a gentleman’s meal with a gentleman’s smoke” (Cigars on Menu, 1936).

Although the Quartz Mountain C.C.C. enrollees were generally well fed, the food situation was not always a happy one. During the yearly inspection on July 27, 1938, Reddoch found many irregularities in the mess hall. He reported

Less than \$20 was spent for fruits and vegetables during month of May. From information given in camp, mess was unsatisfactory for a period of several months and finally culminated in a food strike, participated in by entire company, on June 13, 1938. Since that time mess seems to have been entirely satisfactory. The present Camp Commander has been here for only a short time. He is working, and I believe will soon have his camp in good condition.

In the same inspection report Reddoch noted that the ration cost per enrollee per day was \$.3725 for the week of June 20, 1938. Even though the food situation needed

improvement, the camp kitchen was kept clean. Reddoch indicated that the kitchen and mess hall were in satisfactory condition. Tableware was sterilized after use and cakes, rolls, and pastries were baked in camp rather than purchased (National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1938).

### **Medical Care**

Providing a high level of medical care for enrollees remained a priority for the C.C.C. throughout its existence. The Quartz Mountain camp was no exception. Upon the formation of the camp the Army appointed Major Charles Parker, camp physician for C.C.C. Company 859 in the nearby Wichita National Forest, as temporary physician at Quartz Mountain (174 Enrolled, p. 1).

The camp experienced its first fatality on October 21, 1935. Dr. Arnold Strauss, the recently arrived permanent camp physician, died from serious burns. The physician had left the camp around noon and driven north toward Sayre. Running out of gas, he stopped in Sayre and purchased two gallons of gasoline. After filling the car's fuel tank, investigators assumed that the Doctor placed the empty, lidless can in the front passenger seat. As cigarettes were found near the body, investigators concluded Strauss had struck a match to light a cigarette, and inadvertently ignited the gasoline fumes (A.E. Strauss, 1935; Burns Fatal, 1935; CCC Camp Medic, 1935).

Despite this death the camp maintained an excellent overall health record. Dr. Strauss's replacement, First Lt. Paul G. Sanger of the U.S. Army Medical Reserve strove to keep the boys in good physical health. The camp was equipped with a "nice hospital" that enabled the medical officer to "treat minor injuries and illnesses" and render "temporary relief in emergency cases of a serious nature (Health of Boys, 1936, p. 1).

In typical fashion for Oklahoma C.C.C. camps, Lt. Sanger inspected each enrollee monthly for venereal diseases. He inspected cooks and food handlers weekly. Lt. Sanger remained in the camp through early February 1937 (National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1936). By February 9, 1937, Lt. Sanger's replacement, First Lt. Frank C. Eaton, U.S. Army Medical Reserve, was on duty at the camp. Enrollee health was excellent throughout this period. No time was lost due to sickness from January to September 1937 (Caruthers New, 1937; National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1937).

The period of excellent health came to an end in 1938. While Special Investigator Reddoch claimed that the new contract surgeon, James A. Smith, maintained the camp medical service "up to standard" the camp sick rate drew the attention of C.C.C. officials. Charles Kenlan, assistant to C.C.C. director Fechner, called for an investigation of the 933 man-days of work lost at Quartz Mountain during the spring of 1938 "due to sickness or absence." The investigator found that sickness and injuries accounted for the bulk of the missed days. He found that respiratory illnesses, including bronchitis and pneumonia "which are seasonal in this state," were the primary cause of the lost time, and that the sick rate was "not comparatively high"(National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1938).

Lost work days due to injuries became commonplace among the young men of Camp SP-16. During the period from January 1, 1938, to June 30, 1938, numerous injuries occurred to enrollees. One young man fell from the barracks steps and suffered a contusion of his "left hypochondriac" costing a loss of two work days. Another injured three fingers on his right hand "while engaged in supervised athletics" at a cost of four



lost work days. A mixture of contusions, strains, and punctures cost the C.C.C. a total 44 lost work days for the period (National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1938).

Only months before the closure of Camp SP-16 the company suffered its second death. Enrollee Carl Atchley of Gould, Oklahoma, drowned while attempting to swim across the flooded North Fork of the Red River just below the Lake Altus dam. Divers, boatmen, and enrollees from the camp searched for several days for the body. An Altus man eventually found Atchley's body nearly three miles from the site of the drowning (Body of Camp, 1939; Search River, 1939).

### **Camp Education**

By the time the camp SP-16 was founded in the summer of 1935, the C.C.C. education program was widely in operation. The August 25, 1935, edition of the *Altus Times-Democrat* reported on the educational program at the newly formed camp. Camp officials claimed the goals of the camp's educational system were

1. To develop in each man his powers of self-expression, self-entertainment, and self-(illegible).
2. To develop pride and satisfaction in cooperative endeavor.
3. To develop as far as practicable an understanding of the prevailing social and economic conditions to the end that each man may cooperate (illegible) in improving these conditions.
4. To strengthen and preserve good habits of health and of mental development.
5. By such vocational training as is feasible, but particularly by vocational counseling and adjustment activities to assist each man. (Plateau Will, p. 7)

In order to meet these goals among a group of young men with extremely varied levels of educational experience the educational adviser implemented a diverse program. Enrollees lacking an eighth grade diploma could complete the graduation requirements in the camp. Those desiring to graduate from high school could complete their education through correspondence courses also taken in camp. The September 1936, camp inspection report lists the academic subjects offered to Company 2810 enrollees. They included writing, reading, spelling and arithmetic. As of September 1936, Camp SP-16 included two enrollees classified as illiterates, 61 enrollees functioning on an elementary school level, 73 at the high school level, and 13 at the college level (Education and, 1936; National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1936).

Camp SP-16 offered the young men a wider variety of vocational subjects in 1936. They included agriculture, carpentering [sic], barbering, bookkeeping and painting. N.P.S. technical employees taught other courses such as “job training.” The *Altus Times-Democrat* stated, “On the job the boys are competently taught by experienced and well-trained technical men. These men also hold short lectures on the project they are working on.” Job training in 1936 included constructing vehicle bridges, surveying, bathhouse construction, trail construction, and road construction. Woodworking in the camp’s well-equipped wood shop was a popular “informal” activity. Many enrollees enjoyed courses on the repair and crafting of furniture. During the winter months other popular educational courses included leathercraft and taxidermy. The education program was well attended by the enrollees. The 1936 inspection report recorded a 100 percent enrollee participation rate in the program (Education and, 1936, p. 4; National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1936).

By 1937 the overall number of educational offerings at Camp SP-16 had increased. Academic classes taught included reading and writing, total illiteracy, arithmetic, reading, writing, and total elementary. As in 1936, the camp offered no secondary level academic courses. Vocational offerings were significantly more numerous than in 1936. They included general agriculture, blue prints, cabinet making, C.C.C. administration, conservation of natural resources, mess management, wiring, surveying, and taxidermy. "Job Training" in 1937 included fencing, landscaping, "latrinal", roads, and soil conservation. Activities classified as miscellaneous included first aid and safety. In August 1937, two Company 2810 enrollees were illiterate, 52 functioned at an elementary level, 64 were at the high school level, while 15 were on a college level. Once again the educational adviser reported a 100 percent enrollee participation level (National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1937).

The June 1938, Camp SP-16 inspection reported a drastic downturn in the number of enrollees engaging in educational programming. Of 112 young men in camp only an average of 29 attended classes daily. This dramatic decrease can be explained by the use of a new education program report form in 1938. The new form did not allow general assembly gatherings such as safety meetings to count towards the education participation total. Educational offerings in 1938 were fewer than in 1937. Academic offerings included only reading and writing, civics, reading, and writing. Vocational courses consisted of agriculture, bookkeeping, cabinet making, conservation of wildlife, taxidermy, truck driving, typewriting, and leader training. The adviser listed blueprint

reading, landscaping, and surveying as job training opportunities (National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1938).

### **Camp Recreation**

Camp SP-16 commanders allowed their enrollees ample leisure for the pursuit of recreational opportunities. The camp's close proximity to Lake Altus provided the young men with an outstanding opportunity for swimming and fishing (Things Are, 1936). In 1938 the enrollees engaged in "supervised swimming in the Red River" each afternoon (National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1938).

Athletic competition with area teams was commonplace. Baseball and softball games with local teams such as the Altus Advertisers occupied many summer evenings for the enrollees. Camp SP-16's baseball team played against a variety of other teams including schools, American Legion teams, and the Granite Reformatory team (Advertisers to Play, 1936; Altus Defeats, 1936; First Year, 1936; Reformatory and CCC, 1939). The young men also engaged in athletic competition with each other in the camp. Softball and horse-shoe pitching were common activities (National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1937). The enrollees had access to a variety of sporting equipment. A 1937 inventory of camp equipment lists, "Twelve Baseball Suits, Twelve Pairs Base Ball Shoes, Two Basketballs, Two Volley Balls, One Shot Put, Two Volley Ball Nets, Four Soft Balls, Two Soft Ball Bats, Nine Base Ball Mitts, Three Base Ball Bats, Twelve Base Balls" (National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1937).

Camp SP-16 enrollees could engage in numerous indoor activities during their leisure time as well. The 1937 recreational equipment survey listed a variety of indoor

equipment including, "Two Ping-Pong Tables and Equipment, One Piano, Two Sets Checkers, Two Radios, Two Sets Dominoes, Two Sets Camelot, One deck Flinch Cards, Three Sets Badminton, One Set Finance, Two Combination Boards, Two Decks Monday-Morning-Coach, Four Pair Boxing Gloves" (National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1937). Enrollees desiring to read also had ample opportunity. By 1938 the size of the camp's permanent library was 677 books. The traveling library held 95 books. Enrollees kept abreast of current events with the three newspapers the camp subscribed to, or by listening to the radio in the recreation hall. Beginning in the same year the camp administration showed a motion picture to the young men each week (National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1937; 1938).

Camp SP-16 provided the enrollees with opportunities for socialization with young people from the surrounding communities. During the 1936 open house week a picnic and dance were held for the enrollees. The *Altus Times-Democrat* reported "This is by invitation only but each boy in the camp is privileged to invite friends, both boys and girls, to attend" (First Year, 1936, p. 3). Enrollees had ample opportunity to leave the camp if so desired. The enrollees had two chances each week to catch a C.C.C. truck to nearby Lone Wolf, Oklahoma. If the young man lived nearby weekend passes were easy to obtain. If he lived farther away weekend passes could be granted to communities surrounding the camp (National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1938).

Enrollees had the option of attending religious services during their leisure time as well. Through 1936 Lt. Carol A. Baskin, area C.C.C. chaplain conducted church services

at Camp SP-16 twice per month (Education and, 1936, p. 4). In 1938 C.C.C. Inspector Reddoch noted that services were held four times monthly. Both the chaplain and local ministers conducted two services per month. "60 to 85 percent" of the enrollees attended the services (National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1938a). Camp Commander Hardy praised the high moral character of his C.C.C. company. The *Altus Times-Democrat* reported he "has never seen a drunk or a bottle of liquor in the camps since he has been stationed there" (Education and, 1936, p. 4).

### **Work Projects**

After the formation of Camp SP-16, the new enrollees spent the fall of 1935 engaged in grounds improvements in the park. The *Altus Times-Democrat* reported that the "camp boys are improving roads, graveling walks and sodding the ground in the park acreage." Altus mayor R. W. Culwell praised their efforts. He claimed their work "has made great improvements in the park" (Will Improve, 1935, p. 2).

C.C.C. work on the park site progressed under the close supervision of the N.P.S. technical foremen. O.P. Wilson of nearby Hobart, Oklahoma, served as the N.P.S. work superintendent at camp SP-16 for a yearly salary of \$2,300. At least partially in response to a request from a Hobart native, Mrs. Peachy Bottom, Senator Thomas assisted in securing the position for Wilson. Wilson remained in his position though most of the tenure of Camp SP-16. Through C.C.C. work supervised by Wilson and his staff of technical supervisors, park areas and facilities at Quartz Mountain State Park began to take on a look common to N.P.S. affiliated areas of the period (Bottom to Thomas, 1936; National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1936; 1937; 1938; Things Are, 1936).

Herbert Maier, Rocky Mountain District N.P.S. Regional Director, oversaw all N.P.S. supervised C.C.C. projects in his district including Quartz Mountain. A well-known park architect, Maier operated under a strict design philosophy of his own creation (Schrems, 1995; Weisiger, Allen, Schrems, Clark, Zaepfel, & Vandiver, 1993). In a 1935 address at the N.P.S. Conference of State Park Authorities Maier stated his thoughts on the aesthetic nature of man-made park structures.

Since the primary purpose in setting aside semi-wilderness areas is to conserve them in as nearly a primitive state as possible it follows that every structure, no matter how necessary, must be regarded as an intruder and should be designed with an eye toward making it inconspicuous. These primitive areas are most beautiful in their native condition, and introducing man-made structures cannot improve the beauty of the whole but tends to rather rob the picture which nature has painted of much of its wholesome effect on the visitor, no matter how pleasingly such buildings have been designed. This may be theory, but it is good theory. (Maier, 1935, p. 83)

In keeping with his belief that park structures were necessary evils, Maier elaborated on the idea that a well-designed park structure was inconspicuous (Maier, 1935; Weisiger et al., 1993). As he stated

There are several ways of lessening the conspicuousness of a structure. One of these, of course, is screening the building by locating it behind existing plant material or in a secluded nook in the terrain partly screened by some natural feature. Where sufficient natural plant material does not exist at the site otherwise best suited for the building's function, and adequate screen should be planted by

preferably repeating the same plant material which exists nearby. It is sound theory, however, that structures should be so located and adapted to the natural features of the landscape that it will not be necessary to plant them out. So many park officials have the idea that since most park buildings exist for the use of the visiting public, they must be seen from some distance. Personally I do not share this viewpoint. I would rather see one or more attractive signs, directing me to a particular park building which has been appropriately retired than to find the building on a main park road, near an entrance or visible for a long distance across the landscape. (1935, p. 84)

The structures created by C.C.C. labor at Quartz Mountain State Park reflect Maier's influence. In order to maintain low conspicuousness, he promoted the use of native materials including massive stones and huge logs. Maier desired low-slung park buildings that appeared to grow horizontally from the ground. The N.P.S. technical staff trained the C.C.C. enrollees to construct these rustic architectural style buildings. While some of the N.P.S. staff trained stone cutters, others trained enrollees in making wood shingles. Camp SP-16 architect and later senior engineering foreman, Sam Holland, put Maier's design philosophy into practice at Quartz Mountain State Park. At a yearly salary of \$2,000 he remained throughout the entire period of C.C.C. involvement at the park. The skilled labor provided by the C.C.C. men produced the physically impressive yet still inconspicuous structures that remain standing at Quartz Mountain today (National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1936; 1937; 1938; Weisiger et al., 1993).



By late April 1939, the Oklahoma Division of State Parks announced that Quartz Mountain State Park was ready for general use (Quartz Mountain Park is, 1939; Quartz Mountain Park, 1939). Under Wilson's supervision the young men of Camp SP-16 constructed a variety of rustic structures at Quartz Mountain. A bath-house, in later years converted to a picnic shelter, still serves park patrons. The enrollees built two latrines that remain in use in their original capacity. Near the site of the current park office, the C.C.C. men constructed the community building. Utilizing native granite, the enrollees constructed two physically imposing fireplaces in the building. The structure also contains examples of intricate C.C.C. woodworking. The young men built a five-room caretaker's house with a foundation of granite. Near the lake, a pump house and boat house were completed. They are no longer standing. The enrollees constructed numerous durable camping sites throughout the park. Most include a stone fire pit or upright steel fireboxes (personal observation, April, 2003; Quartz Park, 1939; Weisiger et al., 1993).

### **Community Relations**

Community involvement in the Quartz Mountain C.C.C. camp began from the outset. Shortly following the founding of the camp outside entities contributed to grounds beautification and camp construction projects. In the days following the staffing of the camp the City of Altus presented the camp with a 70 foot flag pole made of steel pipe (Flag Presented, 1935). In the first facility construction project since the opening of the camp, six local men built a "large truck shed"(Will Improve, 1935, p. 2).

Evidence of C.C.C. involvement in the surrounding communities and community involvement in the Quartz Mountain C.C.C. camp was evident through the remainder of

1935. Lt. Bradley and Lt. Cox addressed the Altus Kiwanis club on September 20. Promoting the C.C.C. theme of community involvement, the officers extended an invitation for Kiwanians to visit the camp (CCC Officials, 1935). The Kiwanians reciprocated with an evening of entertainment on November 22. The “Altus Kiwanis Negro Minstrel” was presented as a “means of extending a courtesy to the camp from the Altus club” (Kiwanians Will, 1935, p. 1). Camp administration interaction with Altus civic clubs continued throughout Camp SP-16’s history. In February 1937, Camp Commander Caruthers and Medical Officer Eaton were guests of the Altus Rotary Club. Lt. Caruthers addressed the club and Lt. Eaton “entertained the club with a number of selections” (CCC Officers, 1937, p. 1).

The Quartz Mountain camp was popular with area merchants. The estimated monthly payroll for 1936 was \$5,750. The September 6, 1936 edition of the *Altus Times-Democrat* claimed that with the exception of a “small allowance” the bulk of the payroll was sent to the enrollees’ parents. As most of the Camp SP-16 boys were from surrounding communities in the Harmon, Greer, Tillman, Kiowa, and Jackson County areas, the payroll money was spent locally and benefited the “merchants and businessmen” in the immediate area. In addition to payroll expenditures, the camp spent approximately \$1,000 per month in local food purchases. Other business entities profited as well. The article noted “the camp is also a good customer for building materials and other items of general upkeep” (Camp Payroll, 1936, p. 4; Most of, 1936). The positive relationship between the camp and area businesses was evident during the September 1936, camp open house week. Numerous area businesses ran large ads in the *Altus Times-Democrat* congratulating the camp commanders and enrollees on their first year of

operation (Congratulations Lieut., 1936; Congratulations to, 1936; Greetings Lake, 1936; Only the, 1936; Visit the, 1936).

The potential projects of Camp SP-16 served to unify the efforts of several communities surrounding Quartz Mountain State Park. In mid-February 1936, representatives of several outlying communities including Cheyenne, Weatherford, Mountain View, Hobart, Granite, Mangum, Blair, and Altus met at the park to discuss the planning of a community building at the park site. The representatives appointed a committee to raise the \$2,250 necessary to purchase the 62 acres cited as necessary to construct the building. Within two weeks of the meeting the state park commission condemned the land. The cities of Granite, Hollis, Blair, Mountain View, Hobart, Mangum, and Altus collectively pledged to provide the funds to purchase the land. Park Superintendent Chevront assured civic leaders that construction on the community building, utilizing 181 C.C.C. enrollees, would begin soon (Civic Leaders, 1936; Civic Meeting, 1936; Land Assured, 1936; Land Purchase, 1936; Mangum May, 1936; River Bridge, 1936; \$2,250 Needed, 1936).

While the presence of Camp SP-16 tended generally to unite area communities, an exception surfaced in March 1936. In response to the City of Hobart's failure to provide funds for the community building land purchase, Camp SP-16 began a boycott of Hobart merchants. Community leader Peachy Bottom notified Senator Thomas of the affront. Thomas referred the matter to Director Fechner who contacted N.P.S. Director Arno Cammerer. After an investigation, Assistant Director Wirth notified Thomas that Oklahoma State Park Director Reeves was responsible for the breach of protocol "and has been reprimanded" (Wirth to Thomas, 1936). Wirth further noted that in the future

Camp SP-16 would give all vendors an opportunity to place bids for the provision of goods for the project (Bottom to Thomas, 1936; Fechner to Thomas, 1936; Johnston to Thomas, 1936; Thomas to Fechner, 1936; Wirth to Thomas).

The Quartz Mountain C.C.C. camp held regular open houses. In celebration of the one-year anniversary of the founding of Camp SP-16 an open house week was held in September 1936. The camp administration encouraged area citizens to visit the park for guided tours of both the C.C.C. camp and the work project areas. In addition, the camp treated the city councils and mayors of Hobart, Mangum, and Altus to a banquet (First Year, 1936). On April 4, 1937, in commemoration of the fourth anniversary of the founding of the C.C.C. the Altus Camp hosted another open house. Camp commander Caruthers invited parents of enrollees as well as interested citizens for tours, entertainment, and refreshments (Altus Camp, 1937). The April 1939 C.C.C. sixth anniversary open house offered "a band concert" by the "Oklahoma State Reformatory band." Visitors were well fed. They consumed 2,400 free doughnuts and one hundred gallons of coffee. Enrollees led more than 2,000 people on guided tours of the camp and park on a beautiful spring day (CCC Openhouse Attracts, 1939; CCC Openhouse Will, 1939). In addition to assisting with the open houses, the young men of Company 2810 interacted with the public in a variety of ways including greeting park patrons and directing traffic (Quartz Mountain, 1937).

The staff of the *Altus Times-Democrat* took a special interest in the young men of the Quartz Mountain C.C.C. camp. By April 1939, the C.C.C. would force 70 to 80 enrollees to leave Camp SP-16 due to their having reached the 24 years of age limit, or the 18 consecutive months of service limit. To assist the young men with their return

home the newspaper staff developed a program to help place them in jobs. Each day the newspaper ran a short article on one of the enrollees. The articles named the young man, described his C.C.C. training, gave his date of birth, dates of C.C.C. service, and listed jobs the Camp SP-16 administration believed he was qualified for (CCC Boys Need, 1939; CCC Enrollee, 1939; CCC Workers, 1939).

Community pride in Camp SP-16 ran high. An editorial in the May 1, 1936 *Altus Times-Democrat* expressed this pride while encouraging area residents to visit the camp.

One of the finest things the federal government is now doing is maintaining the Civilian Conservation Corps camps throughout the nation. The most bitter opponents of the present administration say that this is a most worthy project. Objections to them have been voiced but by a very few sore-headed partisans. One of these camps is located at Lake Altus....We want to urge you to visit the Lake Altus CCC camp at your first opportunity. You will be accorded a most cordial welcome and someone will be there to show you what the boys are doing....The young men of the CCC camp are interested in developing the park at Lake Altus. Already they have transferred many of the works of nature into spots of great beauty....Lieutenant Hardy says that he is now working with the finest group of young men he has ever been in contact with. This is quite complimentary to southwest Oklahoma because most of the 178 boys enrolled are from Jackson, Kiowa, Tillman, Greer and Harmon counties. Real leadership is being developed in these boys and they are serious in their work. The people of Jackson county should especially be interested in the Lake Altus CCC camp. Go up and find out what the boys are doing and express your appreciation....Long

after the CCC camp is moved the people will be enjoying the fine things the boys will leave behind. (Things Are, 1936, p. 3)

### **The Camp Closes**

By the summer of 1939 C.C.C. work on Quartz Mountain State Park had come to a close. On July 18 Hilory Tolson, the new N.P.S. Regional Director, informed U.S. Representative Wilburn Cartwright of the status of N.P.S. supervised Oklahoma C.C.C. camps. Camp SP-16, Quartz Mountain State Park, was on the termination list (Tolson to Cartwright, 1939, p. 1). The closure created an uproar. In response to Senator Thomas's request to N.P.S. Director Arno Cammerer for more information on the status of camp SP-16, Conrad Wirth clarified the closure situation on August 9.

The termination of this camp on October 1 has been recommended because sufficient facilities have been provided and further development of the area would not be warranted. It is our understanding that the State has attempted to increase the size of the park, but to date it has not succeeded in providing additional land. We do not know whether the acquisition of more land is still contemplated, but any future participation in the development of Quartz Mountain State Park by the National Park Service would have to be based upon the action of the State in this regard. Should additional land be acquired and the State desire further development of the park, the Service will be pleased to give every possible consideration to such proposal as may be presented by the State park officials.

(Wirth to Thomas, 1939, p. 1)

By early August a concerted effort to save the camp was underway. Echoing Wirth's claim that the project would continue if the state purchased additional land a group of

“local persons” met with Glenn R. Darrel, the Director of Oklahoma State Parks, and Ted Forbes, the newly appointed Quartz Mountain State Park project superintendent. The group proposed a number of improvements to be undertaken by the C.C.C. in the event of an appropriation for new land from the Oklahoma state park board. Proposed improvements included a swimming pool, fishing pier, boat pier, cabins, and a boat house (Park Projects, 1939, p. 1).

The efforts to save the camp ultimately failed. A September 8 C.C.C. press release officially announced the closing of the camp to the public (Federal Security Agency, Civilian Conservation Corps, 1939). The camp closed on October 1. In late October the C.C.C. transferred the company of 180 enrollees from Quartz Mountain to a “biological survey CCC camp” near San Antonio, New Mexico by train (CCC Boys to Depart, 1939, p. 1; CCC Camp Will, 1939, p. 1). However, the camp structures remained and were soon put to use in the service of yet another New Deal work relief program. In 1940 the Work Projects Administration, under the supervision of the Bureau of Reclamation, began work on a massive irrigation project at Lake Lugert. The W.P.A. workers involved in enlarging the Lake Lugert dam were housed in the C.C.C. barracks, while project supervisors utilized the administration buildings (CCC Barracks at, 1940; CCC Barracks Will, 1940; Former CCC, 1940; Lugert Survey, 1940).

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## CHAPTER V

### The Civilian Conservation Corps in Clinton, Oklahoma: Co. 2826, Camp SCS-5

#### A C.C.C. Camp for Clinton

Interest in a C.C.C. camp in the Clinton, Oklahoma area began in fall 1933, shortly after the commencement of Corps work throughout the nation. The October 8, 1933, issue of the *Clinton Daily News* recorded the first mention of a possible C.C.C. camp in the area. An Army Reserve Captain, Scott Smith, began the push for a local camp. Smith, a U.S. Postal Service employee serving in Clinton, had recently returned from a two-week tour of duty as commander of a C.C.C. camp in southeastern Oklahoma. Smith urged Clinton citizens to contact George Phillips, Oklahoma State Forester, and Robert Fechner, C.C.C. Director, and request a camp for Lake Clinton (Move Started, 1933).

Smith claimed Lake Clinton, a City of Clinton owned lake located 16 miles west of the southwestern Oklahoma town, as a likely site for a C.C.C. camp. Two days later the Clinton Chamber of Commerce sent word to federal authorities expressing the community's interest in hosting a camp (C.C.C. Camp is, 1933; Move Started, 1933). While Oklahoma Governor "Alfalfa Bill" Murray lent his support to the project, federal officials provided less hope. The C.C.C. had already named all of the Oklahoma camps for the winter period. No further references to Clinton area C.C.C. activity were found in the *Clinton Daily News* for nearly one and one half years (Group Will, 1933; Hope For, 1933).

By April 1935, Clinton area residents again had reason to hope for a camp in the area. In a letter to Tom Dale, Clinton Public Schools vocational agriculture teacher, Dr. N.E. Winters, Regional Director of the Soil Erosion Service, announced the establishment of 28 Soil Erosion C.C.C. camps in Oklahoma including a probable camp in Custer County. This news generated a high level of excitement among Clinton residents. Clinton, with a 1940 Census population of 6,736, was the largest city in Custer County (County Erosion, 1935; Erosion Camp, 1935; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1943).

The possibility of C.C.C. Soil Erosion camps in western Oklahoma started a widespread push for assurance of their placement. Oklahoma politicians including Senator Elmer Thomas, Representative Wesley E. Disney, and Representative Josh Lee lent their support to the establishment of the camps. Seventh Congressional District representative Sam Massingale and Congressman at Large Will Rogers untiringly lobbied federal soil erosion officials to guarantee camps for western Oklahoma (Soil Experiment, 1935; Solons In, 1935). Massingale stated, "The Oklahoma delegation has scarcely done anything in the past several days except contact members of the soil erosion service" (Sam Massingale Is, 1936; Solons In, p. 1).

The C.C.C. announced the placement of 123 camps "in the dust storm belt," an area that included western Oklahoma, on May 10 (Erosion Camps, 1935, p. 1). The soil erosion control plan would include a \$1,000,000 first year allotment for the Washita Valley of which the Clinton area was a part (Erosion Control, 1935). Inspection of potential campsites began in Custer County on June 5. The site selection team consisted of Captain Cooper and Major Graves of the Army, G.W. Taylor, a farm management

specialist with the Soil Conservation Service, and Irvin D. Nicholas, the S.C.S. chief Oklahoma agronomist. The team visited potential C.C.C. campsites in the Hammon, Arapaho, and Clinton areas (Proposed Sites, 1935; Sites For, 1935). The men judged prospective camp locations in terms of health and sanitation, proximity to work sites, and access to towns, “conveniences”, and highways (Proposed Sites p. 1).

By June 7 Army officials had narrowed the possible Custer County C.C.C. campsite to three areas in Clinton. Official word of Clinton’s approval for a camp came on June 21. The final choice of campsites was a seven-acre area triangular plot located on the southeastern edge of Clinton. The camp would border two city streets and U.S. Highway 66. The Army obtained a two-year lease on the site from Phoebe Hall. City officials reacted gratefully to the placement of the camp in Clinton. They agreed to provide water to the camp for actual cost and provide sewer connections (CCC Camp Here, 1935; Clinton Trust, 1935; Three Possible, 1935).

Over the course of the next month the Army opened bids and awarded contracts for construction of the Clinton Camp. A Garden City, Kansas, company, Joseph Sebacher Construction, won the contract with the low bid of \$9,682.42. The contract stipulated that construction of the 11 camp buildings begin within two days of the issuance of the work order. The Army further required the completion of the project within 35 days of the commencement of work. Contractor Sebacher, interviewed while in Clinton, commented that the federal government would supply most of the building materials. The contractor expected 17 rail cars of lumber panels from Laurel, Mississippi, to arrive in Clinton soon (Award Contract, 1935; 17 Carloads, 1935; To Let, 1935).

The Army issued the Clinton camp work order on July 16. On the same day the first three rail cars of building materials arrived in town. By the next day work was underway on the camp. Sebacher was engaged in hiring 60 construction workers. He stated, "I think that everyone who has applied so far will get a job" (Work Proper, 1935, p. 1). Unskilled workers would receive 45 cents per day while skilled workers received 75 cents. Later, Sebacher turned hiring duties over to the Clinton federal reemployment office. Work progressed at a rapid pace. By July 19 the foundation of one building was complete while several others neared completion. By July 23 the last rail car of building materials was due to arrive and work began in earnest (Clinton CCC, 1935; Last Material, 1935; Work Orders, 1935; Work Proper).

The newly named C.C.C. project superintendent, C.A. Clausen of the S.C.S., announced the nearing of bid opening on the camp's two technical service buildings. The original camp construction bid did not include the technical service structures because of the division of authority in the C.C.C. The Army, as the organization responsible for C.C.C. enrollee life, authorized the construction of the bulk of the camp structures, while the S.C.S. served to supervise only the work projects. As such, the S.C.S. released its own bid specifications. A local contractor, J. Malson, began work on one building on August 15. This 22 feet wide and 168 feet long structure would include 11 truck garages, a repair shop, a tool room, and the technical service offices. By August 15 work on the 11 camp buildings constructed for the Army under Sebacher's supervision neared completion (Await Plans, 1935; First CCC, 1935; Materials For, 1935; Start Technical, 1935).

An advance team of 14 C.C.C. enrollees and an Army officer arrived in Clinton on August 13 to ready the camp for opening the following week. The group of C.C.C. men including “a chief clerk, first sergeant, desk sergeant, five cooks, first aid man, two truck drivers, two crew leaders, and a mess sergeant” worked under the supervision of Lt. C.C. Mackey. They unloaded bunks, mess supplies, and miscellaneous equipment. The same day the camp’s contract physician reported for duty (First CCC, 1935, p. 1).

On the nineteenth of August 189 enrollees reported for duty at the newly formed Clinton camp. The C.C.C. filled the initial quota of 189 enrollees with 50 young men from Beckham County, 49 from Roger Mills County, 55 from Washita County, and 35 from Custer County. The *Clinton Daily News* reported that these young men, chosen from relief rolls, would be paid “\$30 per month, not less than \$22 of which must be sent home” (189 Youths, 1935, p. 1). During their first week in the Corps the young men adjusted to camp life. The Army divided the men into five barracks groups. They received smallpox and typhoid vaccinations. During the first week, a period of conditioning, the men only engaged in light chores around the camp. By August 29 the S.C.S. had chosen the camp’s seven Local Experienced Men and the technical service building neared completion (Soil Work, 1935).

The C.C.C. designated the site Camp SCS-5. The camp administration gave SCS-5 the more commonly used name Camp Church. Camp leaders intended the name as a tribute to Dr. Lloyd E. Church and the Clinton Chamber of Commerce. Dr. Church served as the president of the Clinton Chamber of Commerce during the 1934 and 1935 efforts to secure the camp. The C.C.C. selected Company 2826 as the name for the group

of young men assembled at the camp (Clinton Started, 1936; National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1936a).

Lt. James Higgins provided a detailed description of the campsite in early 1936.

He wrote

There are twelve buildings on the CCC campus, five of these are barracks with a total capacity of 230 men, one mess hall, one infirmary, a recreation hall, officers quarters and latrine....David Moss of the soils department sketched the system of walks and passway [sic] now in use, limestone was quarried by the boys and hauled in to form the walk borders and gravel was purchased to fill in these walks. The campus was plowed and harrowed, raked and planted in clover and grass (winter type)....The buildings are now modern in every respect....Flowers will be planted over the campus in the constructed flower beds, additional shrubbery will be planted around the buildings with a view of improving further the general appearance of the camp. (Campus At, 1936)

### **Military Involvement**

Military leadership at Camp SCS-5 underwent frequent changes during the first year of operation. The first Company 2826 commander, Captain Fred B. Widmoyer, saw the camp through the formative months. Lieutenant E.O. Sheldon replaced Widmoyer in February 1936. Though only serving a short term in Camp Church, young Lt. Sheldon gained favor with Clinton civic leaders (Capt. Widmoyer, 1936; Lieut. Sheldon, 1936). The *Clinton Daily News* noted, "he has made a capable and efficient commander and the camp here has shown the results of his supervision. Lieut. Sheldon has a wide

acquaintance among the business and professional men of Clinton and proved himself a popular leader” (Lieut. Sheldon, p. 1).

The C.C.C. transferred the popular camp commander to the Sulphur camp in June 1936. The Corps transferred Sheldon’s replacement, John S. Eagan, from the Sulphur camp. Eagan held the rank of First Lieutenant in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve. His tenure of nearly four years would become by far the longest remaining of the Camp Church commanding officers. Eagan, described as a “nice guy” who was “fair but didn’t take any guff,” (Co. 2826 Enrollee B, personal communication, September 17, 2003) served in the Clinton camp through May 1940. His temporary replacement, Arlo Calkins, had previously served as the Company 2826 junior officer. Lt. Charles Stanley, described as “a nice fellow” by a former Company 2826 enrollee, (Co. 2826 Enrollee A, personal communication, September 15, 2003) assumed command of the camp in June 1940. After the Army called Stanley to active duty, they replaced him at Camp Church with a Puerto Rican native, Captain Jose Chacon. Chacon, too, was soon called to active duty. The Army replaced him in April 1941 with Kenneth Hand. Captain Hand, transferred from the Yukon C.C.C. camp, would remain as commander of the camp until its closure in the spring of 1942 (Camp Commander Goes, 1936; CCC Head, 1941; Lieut. Eagan, 1940; Lt. Standley, 1940; National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1936a, 1937a, 1938a, 1939a, 1940a).

Area Army reserve officers made frequent use of the Camp Church facilities throughout its time in Clinton. On October 15, 1935, the Army conducted the first “troop school” at the camp. These meetings, held weekly through the winter months, presented the assembled reserve officers with lessons in military history. The topic of the first

Camp SCS-5 series of meetings was the “British Mesopotamian Campaign in Turkey” (Officers Troop, 1935, p. 1). In 1938 the weekly Troop Schools resumed. The 1938 – 1939 program dealt with the “events leading to and including the Russo-Japanese war” (Troop School, 1938).

In the years following the formation of Camp Church, western Oklahoma C.C.C. officials typically downplayed the military connection. One exception to this pattern resulted in the ouster of the western Oklahoma C.C.C. commander in October 1936. The commander, Major Rote, ordered his camps to remove all civilian clothing and radios from their enrollees. Representative Jed Johnson claimed Major Rote stated, “We’re going to make real soldiers out of them” after issuing the removal order. The *Clinton Daily News* reported, “When Major Rote issued his orders requiring CCC youths to wear their uniforms, some ill-fitting, on ‘dates’ to church, and on every occasion, a storm of protest arose.” Representative Johnson went personally to the Secretary of War and demanded Rote’s removal. The Secretary ordered Rote transferred back to a regular Army posting in Wyoming (Ban On, 1936, p. 1).

Militarization of the C.C.C. remained a heated topic at the Clinton camp. A January 1937 edition of the *Clinton Daily News* reported the negative attitudes of Company 2826 men to news of pending C.C.C. militarization legislation. The bill, proposed by Representative Jack Nichols of Eufaula, Oklahoma, sought the introduction of military training and discipline in the C.C.C. The newspaper recorded that the legislation

Would find almost solid opposition among youths enrolled in the Clinton CCC camp.... The boys and their parents would stand almost 100 per cent against the



Nichols measure or any other forcing military training upon them while they are in the CCC, a survey disclosed. (Youths Oppose, 1937, p. 1)

The primary objection of the Camp Church men to the legislation was conscription versus enlistment in the military. One Clinton youth explained

We believe in an adequate army and an adequate defense. And it is not a question of whether we are patriotic. It is that we don't believe that they should catch us in here and force military training on us. We would be caught in a trap. (Youths Oppose, p. 1)

The manner in which the legislation proposed to force the training on the Corps seemed to irritate the enrollees. The article recorded

If it were made optional, and the youths were given a voice in whether or not they should receive military training, most would be willing. But they would not on any other basis. The most frequent objection to the CCC military proposal is the fact if the boys had wanted military service they would have enlisted in the army and not have enrolled in the CCC. (Youths Oppose, p. 1)

In the days following Germany's invasion of Poland in September 1939, the topic of C.C.C. militarization reemerged. A September 11 article in the *Clinton Daily News* quoted an assistant to C.C.C. Director Fechner, "We want every mother in America to know...that if her son is among the accepted October volunteers, he will not be put behind a gun" (CCC Enrollees Won't, 1939). On a September 27 visit to Clinton, J.L. Hill, Oklahoma Director of C.C.C. Selection, emphatically denied that C.C.C. enrollment assured Army conscription. The *Clinton Daily News* reported

Hill blasted at the idea that when a boy registers in the CCC he is the same as in the army military service. “This is not true,” Hill said. “The Civilian Conservation Corps is not a part of the United States military service.” At intake and also at orientation meetings, it is fully explained that there is no military training in the CCC, and although there is war in Europe no official plans are afoot to inject military training into the corps. Hill also explained that even though the United States should be drawn into war, CCC enrollees could not be inducted into the fighting forces of the United States except as individuals under the same circumstances as would apply to persons not members of the corps. (CCC Enrollment, 1939; National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1939b)

As conditions in Europe worsened, many Company 2826 enrollees sought to leave the Clinton C.C.C. camp for enlistment in the U.S. armed forces. In the first episode reported by the *Clinton Daily News* four young men requested enlistment in the U.S. Marine Corps in June 1940 (Four CCC Enrollees, 1940). In July two more young men enlisted in the Army (Two CCC Boys, 1940).

The young men remaining in Camp Church in August 1941 sought ways to help with the defense effort. After listening to a program on the Defense Stamp and Bond program by County Judge Donald Darrah, each enrollee pledged to purchase defense stamps. On the next payday all 135 enrollees present in the camp at the time purchased defense stamps. Camp commander Hand pointed out the significance of the enrollees’ sacrifice. The money used to purchase the stamps came from their monthly pay of only eight dollars (Clinton CCC Camp Cooperating, 1941; Defense Stamp, 1941). In

September Lt. Hand volunteered the young Company 2826 men to load donated scrap aluminum into boxcars for the national “Keep ‘Em Flying” drive (CCC Boys Will Load, 1941, p. 1).

With the increased world tension, local attitudes toward military training in the C.C.C. softened. Clinton C.C.C. involvement in the newly established Defense Training Schools began in January 1941. The course designed to teach the 15 participating enrollees how to operate, maintain, and repair automobiles, trucks, and tractors was taught in the garage of local civic leader Doanne Farr’s Clinton Transfer and Storage Company. The C.C.C. released the enrollees three hours per day, five days each week for the eight-week course. A second group of Company 2826 enrollees began a Defense Training School in electrical engineering later in the month. By May 1941 several defense courses were underway at Camp Church. They included first aid, elementary electricity, auto mechanics, and carpentry. Camp Superintendent Collett stated, “This training program will make many additional skilled workers available for the defense jobs and at the same time will enable enrollees to obtain and hold other employment” (Clinton CCC Boys, 1941). These defense courses continued until the closure of the camp (CCC Boys Receiving, 1941; Clinton CCC Boys; Electricity Course, 1941; Local Defense, 1941).

In a May 1941 *Clinton Daily News* editorial Charlie Engleman spoke of his perception of the value of this new C.C.C. defense training.

As an indication of what CCC camps have done for one vocation, army officials of this corps area report that 48 percent of their army cooks were trained by the Civilian Conservation Corps. As Doanne Farr pointed out in a talk we heard him

make recently, all parents have been preparing their children for white-collar jobs for a number of years. In times of national emergency, the effect of this folly is felt. Not enough men have been trained to work with their hands. Not enough stress has been placed upon the prestige of being able to work with the hands.

The CCC organization is one which offers training for boys in many lines, combining skill in working with the hands and the head. (Now What, 1941, p. 1)

With the increased acceptance of C.C.C. militarization came the news of military drill in Camp Church. On September 10, 1941, Lt. Hand reported that 24 enrollees were learning “close-order drills.” Within two weeks these young men would begin training the remainder of the enrollees in the techniques. Eventually drill would occur each morning at 6:00 AM. The *Clinton Daily News* reported camp commanders Hand’s assessment of the situation

Lieut. Wilson Hand, camp commander said the drills are being started by orders of national CCC headquarters. Although the drills will be conducted in military style, the camp commander said the move is regarded here more as a measure of exercises and discipline than of military training. “The boys won’t be carrying rifles or any kind of arms,” Hand said. “They merely will be learning to drill.”

(CCC Camp Boys, 1941, p. 6)

Two former Company 2826 enrollees recalled marching drills in the Clinton camp. One remembered taking “extended hikes” in the area of the camp (Co. 2826 Enrollee B, personal communication, September 17, 2003). Speaking of similar episodes the other enrollee stated

We would get up and have a little in the morning and of an evening we would march the full length from sixth street over to Highway 183...Then we would get on the highway...That's the way we would get our exercise...It was alright. I didn't see anything wrong with it. (Co. 2826 Enrollee A, personal communication, September 15, 2003)

### **Camp Life**

The Company 2826 enrollees, just as other southwestern Oklahoma C.C.C. men, led busy weekdays. The April 19, 1936, Special CCC Edition of the *Clinton Daily News* printed a summary of a typical day at Camp Church written by Lester S. Gilliland, the Camp SCS-5 company clerk. Gilliland recorded activities at the camp between reveille and breakfast.

On a summer morn, the enrollee of a CCC Camp is awakened from healthful sleep by the lusty strains of a bugle at precisely 5:00 a.m. As the enrollees "fall out," the barrack becomes the scene of busy activity and much good natured banter, as the boys dress themselves, make their bunks and start the morning cleanup. In ten or fifteen minutes from the "first call," the bugler sounds "reveille [sic]." This is a signal for all men to line up in formation and have roll call, which is accomplished by the Senior Foreman of the company, or using the army term "1<sup>st</sup> Sgt." as he is generally called. After this detail is over, the men beat a hasty retreat to the bathhouse, where they wash and comb their hair, preparative for breakfast. At 5:30 comes a sound which needs but one introduction to the CCC enrollee: It is the unmistakable bugle call of "soupy-soupy-soupy" or the summons to mess. It is needless to add that the boys need no coaxing, as they

march into the mess hall and take their places at the tables, where they remain standing until the signal is given to be seated. (Busy Day's, 1936, p. B3)

Breakfast at Camp SCS-5 was a hearty affair. On October 5, 1936, a typical work day, the young men ate stewed apricots mixed with prunes, hot oats, creamed beef, and toast served with coffee and milk (National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1936a).

After a quick breakfast the enrollees' day of work began in earnest. Gilliland further stated

Immediately after breakfast, the "police call" is sounded. All the members of the company line up at one end of the camp area and at a signal, a minute search of the grounds is made for match stems, cigarette butts, pieces of paper, and other trash. These are collected and put into the trash cans. At 6:30 the boys are summoned to work and are turned over to the Soil Conservation Service, where they report to their respective sections, pile into the trucks and are off to the field for the day! (Busy Day's, 1936, p. B3)

While in the field the young men ate cold lunches. On October 5, 1936, the enrollees on work detail ate one cheese paste sandwich, one peanut butter sandwich, one jam and butter sandwich, and one apple for lunch. A former Company 2826 enrollee recalled the work detail meals. He stated, "We ate a lot of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches" while in the field. Without enthusiasm for the quality of these cold meals he claimed "Well, it would keep you alive" (Co. 2826 Enrollee A, personal communication, September 15, 2003). The men assigned to camp overhead details fared better. On October 5, 1936, the enrollees remaining in camp lunched on beef hash, French-fried potatoes, whole peas,

slaw, apple sauce, bread, and tea (National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1936a).

After an eight-hour workday the S.C.S. returned the Company 2826 men to Camp Church. Gilliland described the scene.

About 2:30 in the afternoon, the boys return from the field, read the bulletin board for station announcements and clean themselves up for the day. For the remainder of the afternoon the boys are free to do as they choose, unless they are unfortunate enough to be on the “extra duty” list, as is sometimes the case. These men are usually detailed to mow the lawns, water the trees or work here and there around the camp area. The remainder of the boys play baseball, checkers, ping-pong, or read during the afternoon. Some of the boys who are musically inclined play the guitar, or the piano, which has but recently been purchased for the recreation hall from the company fund. At 4:45 in the afternoon the boys are dressed in their summer khakis in front of the company flag-pole where they are inspected for cleanliness, and stand at attention as the flag is lowered while the bugler sounds “To the colors.” This is not a military formation but is merely an act of patriotism for true citizens of the United States. (Busy Day’s, 1936, p. B3)

After the military conducted the afternoon retreat, enrollees “double timed” to the mess hall for “evening mess” and camp announcements (Busy Day’s, 1936, p. B3). The evening meal was typically the largest of the day. The October 5, 1936, supper at Camp SCS-5 consisted of chili, fried potatoes, kidney beans, crackers, cold slaw, jell-o, and coffee (National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1936a).

Depending upon the day of the week, the remainder of the enrollees' day could be spent as chosen either in camp or in Clinton. Gilliland described Company 2826 activities following evening mess

Classes begin at 6:00 and all members are enrolled in at least one or two sessions. These classes are held on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday nights, and all basic unrated enrollees are compelled to remain in camp on these nights, with the exception of Thursday nights when they are released at 7:45 in order to attend "bank night" at the local theaters. On Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights the boys are free to go where they wish, provided their discipline and behavior is such as to warrant it. Promptly at 9:00 in the evening "call to quarters" is sounded. This is a summons for all members to prepare for bed. The lights are turned out at 9:30, and at 10:30 bed-check is made by the night-watchman to ascertain if every member is present. So ends the daily routine of a CCC boy.

(Busy Day, 1936, p. B3)

Keeping the 200 men of Camp Church well fed was not an easy task. The job of providing the entire company with three balanced meals per day, seven days per week, 365 days per year, required organization and efficiency. The person responsible for this feat was the mess officer. The junior military officer at the Clinton camp served in this capacity. His second in command was the mess steward. The mess steward, selected from the ranks of the enrollees, supervised the kitchen police and cooks. He ensured the smooth operation of the mess and the timeliness of meals (Feeding 200, 1936, p. B3).

The April 19, 1936, Special CCC Edition of the *Clinton Daily News* took readers on a tour of the Camp SCS-5's mess.



There are two cooks on duty each day, a first cook and a second cook, also a pastry cook who does all of the cooking of pies, doughnuts, and any other pastry that might come in on the menu. Now that we have the cooks busy for the next few hours let's look around and see what the other men in the mess hall are doing. Over in one corner we find two men busily engaged in the good old game of "peeling spuds," (note, this game is very unpopular in most camps). In another corner we find two men engaged in washing dishes...One of the men wash [sic] the dishes in hot soap and water while the other man rinses them in clear boiling hot water after which they are placed in a sterilizer and sterilized with steam. The dishes are then placed on a dish rack and from there they are taken to the tables. In the mess hall proper we find two men industriously scrubbing away with hot soap and water on the table tops; this is done after each meal. After this is accomplished the floor is then scrubbed, the tables are set and everything is ready for the dinner to be served. The food is placed on the table never earlier than five or ten minutes before the men come in...After everything is all set, mess call is sounded and the men then come to the mess hall where they march in and remain standing until all of them are in, at which time a whistle is blown and the men all sit down at once...this gives every man an even break and helps to prevent accidents in the starting line. (Feeding 200, 1936, p. B3)

### **Medical Care**

The physicians at Camp Church were "primarily concerned with keeping the enrollees in good physical condition" (Camp Physician, 1936, p. B1). During the first years of operation this duty fell to Army Medical Reserve officers. In the years

preceding U.S. entry into World War II, Camp SCS-5 relied more heavily on civilian contract physicians (National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1936-1942a). The medical officer held two sick calls each day. Any enrollee with a health concern could report to the infirmary for medical treatment. Young men experiencing medical emergencies could be brought in to the infirmary at any time. If the medical officer judged the situation serious enough, he ordered the enrollee transported via the camp ambulance truck to the post hospital at Fort Sill. Those young C.C.C. men with truly life-threatening cases entered the Clinton Baptist Hospital for treatment under a local agreement with Camp Church (Camp Hospital, 1936; Health Record, 1937).

The camp infirmary, given an excellent rating by C.C.C. Special Investigator J.C. Reddoch, held four beds and a variety of medical equipment and supplies. In addition to the camp physician, a physician's aide, selected from the enrollees, worked in the infirmary. Camp Church officials claimed their infirmary was the most modern of all those located in Clinton's C.C.C. sub-district (Health Record, 1937; National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1937a).

Routine medical checkups conducted on the enrollees required large portions of the camp physician's time. The medical officer gave each enrollee a checkup once per month. This checkup system included an inspection of each enrollee for infectious and contagious conditions including venereal disease. After 1939 the camp physician checked food handlers for venereal diseases weekly (Camp Hospital, 1936; Health Record, 1937; National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1940a).

The camp medical officer was responsible for the sanitation and cleanliness of the camp. He inspected all Camp SCS-5 buildings daily. Under his supervision enrollees

cleaned their barracks daily and scrubbed them two times each week. The camp physician inspected the mess hall twice each day. In order to insure adherence to C.C.C. standards, he personally tasted each item on the menu every day. Under his supervision the mess hall remained spotlessly clean. Following each meal enrollees on kitchen police duty scrubbed the tabletops. Enrollees washed the dishes with hot soapy water and then placed them in the sterilizer for twenty minutes. The medical officer inspected the plates for evidence of grease before meals (Camp Hospital, 1936).

Good enrollee health became a hallmark of the Clinton camp. Camp records indicated that by July 1937 each enrollee in Camp Church had gained between ten to thirty pounds of muscle. Height gains of between one to three inches were common as well. Enrollee chest expansions ranged from increases of one-half to two and one-half inches. The Company 2826 injury rate in the same period was equally outstanding. The camp flagpole flew the “no accident” pennant indicating that no enrollee injuries occurred during the previous month. In contrast to other southwestern Oklahoma camps, no deaths had occurred among Clinton enrollees (Health Record, 1937).

The perfect record of no Company 2826 deaths ended in June 1937. A harvest accident badly burned enrollee Johnnie Driscoll. On leave from Camp SCS-5 in order to help with harvest, the 24 year old was filling the fuel tank of a hot tractor when the gas can exploded in his hands covering him in flames (Inquiry Into, 1937; Youth Is, 1937). This death, while disturbing to Camp SCS-5 administrators, did not occur during official C.C.C. duty. An overall record of good health followed Company 2826 to the end of the C.C.C. program. In 1941 Camp Church contract physician, Curtis Cunningham claimed, “what little illness we have is of the accidental type” (Boy’s Health, 1941).

## Camp Education

Company 2826's first educational adviser was Ross W. Frederick. Frederick developed a varied program of academic and vocational instruction. To build a teaching faculty he enlisted the help of many interested individuals in the camp. The S.C.S. staff, the Army officers, a W.P.A. teacher, an assistant educational adviser, and an enrollee all taught courses at Camp Church. Academic topics included elementary courses designed to help enrollees "who didn't have the opportunity to attend the regular school terms", and art. Enrollees desiring to complete high school could enroll in correspondence courses through the University of Oklahoma. The camp offered a greater range of vocational courses including first aid, auto mechanics, agriculture, soil conservation, typing, business review, and public speaking (Ross Frederick, 1936).

As part of a journalism class taught by Educational Adviser Frederick, the young men of Company 2826 produced a bi-monthly newspaper. The camp would distribute the mimeographed newspaper called "The Baffler" to enrollees only. The 16 member newspaper staff included an editor-in-chief, two associate editors, a feature editor, two sports editors, a cartoonist, and 9 reporters. Containing articles about the camp, the single-sheet newspaper measured "8 1/2 by 14 inches in size with reading matter printed on both sides." The enrollees printed the first issue in November 1935 (CCC Camp Journalists, 1935, p. 1; Enrollees At, 1935).

By the time of Camp SCS-5's first annual inspection in October 1936, Ralph C. Veasey was the new educational adviser. Under Veasey's supervision the camp's educational offerings expanded greatly. Academic courses available to enrollees in the fall of 1936 included algebra, American history, American literature, biology, English

composition I, grammar, journalism, Latin, physical geography, physiology, political science, psychology, and writing. Those young men inclined towards vocational courses had a similarly wide selection. The vocational offerings included agriculture, bookkeeping, business arithmetic, business English, business training, C.C.C. administration, carpentry, cooking, free-hand drawing, mechanical drawing, radio engineering, shorthand, taxidermy, and typewriting. Veasey reported one hundred percent participation in the educational program. Under Veasey's leadership the camp library also experienced great growth. The number of books in the library rose from 50 in fall 1935 to 300 in fall 1936. In addition to the library, the camp reading room contained 52 periodicals, newspapers, and some fiction works. Veasey's efforts yielded positive results. In May 1937, 20 Company 2826 youths received eighth grade diplomas. Clinton C.C.C. officials believed this to be the largest amount of eighth grade graduates from any camp in the nation (Camp Library, 1935; Every Enrollee, 1936; National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1936a; 20 Clinton, 1937).

By 1938 the C.C.C. replaced Veasey with O.M. Martin. Martin continued the Camp Church tradition of a strong educational program. Assisted by the camp military officers and the technical service personnel, Martin conducted courses in a new educational building transferred from a Ponca City, Oklahoma, C.C.C. camp in 1939. The 1940 Company 2826 academic courses offered to enrollees included first through fifth grade arithmetic, grammar, geography, history, reading, spelling – penmanship, and the same offerings presented at the six to eighth grade level. High school level courses offered in the camp were American history, American literature, and English literature. Martin's vocational offerings included agriculture, auto mechanics, blacksmithing, mess

management, engineering, and typing (National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1940a; Webb Stationed, 1939).

At a December 1939 speaking engagement in Clinton, Martin discussed the role of the C.C.C. educational program.

It is the CCC plan to learn the primary interest of each boy and teach that boy accordingly. By doing it in this manner we can get the full interest of the boy and the other points of education will develop accordingly....These boys get shop training also...This is not to teach them to be master mechanics...but to educate them as to the use of tools, so they will be able to do many things around their homes. It helps to develop them to the point of enriching their own individual lives. The whole plan of the CCC is to help these boys to enjoy a fuller and better citizenship. (CCC Education, p. 5)

The results of the Camp Church educational program were impressive. By July 1941, 37 enrollees had completed elementary work, 136 graduated from the eighth grade, and 102 received high school credits through correspondence work (Educational Work, 1941, p. B1).

Even though many Camp Church enrollees took part in the educational program, participation was not total. A former Company 2826 enrollee recalled never taking an educational course during his year at Camp Church in 1941 and 1942. He remembered the program as an unpopular one with the bulk of the enrollees (Co. 2826 Enrollee A, personal communication, September 15, 2003).

## Camp Recreation

Army Captain Fred Widmoyer, first commanding officer of Camp SCS-5, encouraged his young charges to engage in recreational activities. During their first week in the new camp many enrollees experienced homesickness. As a remedy, Captain Widmoyer instructed 24 enrollees about to depart on weekend leave to, "Bring back your musical instruments and ball equipment" (CCC Boys Ready, 1935, p. 1). Lieutenant J.R. Hudgins, camp medical officer, developed a plan for the boys' leisure hours. Competitive sports played a major role. Dr. Hudgins stated, "We are going to work up some competition between the barracks." The officer planned for the young men to play baseball, softball, tennis, and "other sports." Musical activities would have a part in Hudgins's recreation program as well. "We have some pretty talented musicians and we are going to work up some plans along that line" (CCC Boys Ready p. 1; CCC Enrollees Take, 1936).

Boxing became an early favorite with Clinton enrollees. Within one month of the founding of the camp, the Company 2826 enrollees met the men of the Lake Clinton Transient Camp in a boxing match. The match, held at the Clinton Lake American Legion Pavilion, brought out "considerable rivalry between the two camps." The C.C.C. camp won. (CCC Camp Wins Boxing, 1935). The C.C.C. camp continued to meet the Clinton Lake men in boxing matches until the transient camp closed in early 1936. The bouts drew large crowds and officials claimed that, "all ladies will be admitted free" (Camps To, 1935, p. 1; Transient Camp, 1936; Transients Lose, 1935).

Baseball was another popular activity with the men of Camp SCS-5. The 1936 Clinton baseball season opened in March when the C.C.C. team met the Clinton All

Stars. During the following seasons the enrollees played a variety of area Oklahoma Sand Lot League teams including Stafford, Red Rock, Binger C.C.C., Cache C.C.C., Hobart C.C.C., Sentinel C.C.C., Watonga C.C.C., Bill's Bakers, and Sunset with mostly positive results. The Company 2826 men hosted numerous games on their camp's own baseball diamond. Baseball remained a popular recreational activity with the Clinton C.C.C. men until the closure of the camp in 1942 (Bakers To, 1936; Ball Teams, 1937; Baseball Game At, 1936; Baseball Teams, 1936; CCC Camp Team, 1936; CCC Camp Team To, 1936; CCC Camp Wins From, 1938; CCC Nine Meets, 1936; CCC Sports, 1936; Co. 2826 Enrollee A, personal communication, September 15, 2003; McGuire Leads, 1940; National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1938a, 1942a).

With a massive, new Federal Emergency Relief Administration constructed municipal swimming pool located near the camp, the young men of Camp Church had ample opportunity for aquatic recreation. Less than one month after the formation of Company 2826, the Clinton camp hosted the "district and sub-district CCC swimming meet." Many C.C.C. youths from the Clinton, Lugert, Sentinel, Binger, and Rush Springs camps attended (Many Expected, 1935; Swimming Pool, 1935). With City of Clinton supplied "cut rate tickets" many enrollees enjoyed occasional dips in the new pool (Recreational Program, 1941).

Though not a part of the Camp SCS-5 organized recreational program, the enrollees enjoyed a variety of camp pets. In 1938, camp commander Eagan claimed his camp had the "biggest menagerie" of any Oklahoma C.C.C. camp. The animals included a roadrunner, a tame crow named Bill, and seven ground squirrels. The enrollees



captured the animals while on various work projects. The young men of Camp Church spent many enjoyable hours caring for their pets (CCC Camp Pets, 1938). In late 1939, Bill the Crow mysteriously left camp. He returned with a broken wing several weeks later. Eagan commented, “he’s angry, but he’s back...He’s pretty touchy about that broken wing, but other wise he is the same old Bill who used to play every trick he could think of on the enrollees” (Pet Crow, 1939). By 1940 a popular pup named “Toots” was the Company 2826 mascot. She enjoyed joining in during the playing of the Star Spangled Banner during evening retreat “with her moanful high whiskey tenor voice” (Clinton CCC Camp, 1940, p. 5).

### **Work Projects**

The young men of the newly formed Camp Church expected to begin work in early September 1935 (Soil Work, 1935). As a S.C.S. supervised C.C.C. camp the Company 2826 enrollees would primarily engage in work projects designed to reduce soil erosion and promote soil-conserving practices. The Oklahoma State Planning Board (1936) noted the principal functions of the S.C.S. in Oklahoma.

The Soil Conservation Service maintains projects demonstrating practical and efficient measures of soil conservation, supervises actual work upon the land in cooperation with the owners, and develops erosion-control methods through persistent research and investigation. The erosion-control program carried on in demonstration project areas includes crop rotation, terracing, contour farming, strip-cropping, fire prevention, pasture management, retirement of severely eroded land, control of gullies, and use of winter cover crops. (p. 126)

In the summer of 1935, Clinton area farmers were curious about the specific types of work the newly formed C.C.C. company would undertake. On August 21, *The Clinton Daily News* provided the first indications of what projects local farmers could expect from the Clinton enrollees. The article stated, “The CCC youths will construct terrace outlets, outlet ditches with vegetation and structural protection, diversion ditches, gully controls, small dams and spillways, rip-rap for ponds, and other conservation projects” (Way To, 1935, p. 1).

These C.C.C. projects relied upon the willingness of individual farmers to participate in the program. Camp Project Supervisor Clausen stated that farmers desiring these soil conservation measures applied to their farms should contact S.C.S. representatives. The S.C.S. would send a soil technician to the farm to map the plot indicating topography, soil types, and field layout. After completion of the map the S.C.S. and the farmer could come to a “five-year agreement.” The agreement compelled the farmer to engage in soil conserving practices including gully control, terracing, cropping systems, preventing overgrazing, and potential dam construction in exchange for the C.C.C. work (Agreements For, 1935; Oklahoma State Planning Board, 1936; Way To, 1935).

An engineer, assisted by C.C.C. men, would design the individual projects. The cost of this work to the farmer was minimal. Clausen stated, “The only thing the farmer is required to furnish is power and his own labor for the construction of the terrace ridges.” In addition, the farmer would provide incidental labor and materials. Many materials, such as rocks, needed to complete the work projects could be taken from the

farm. By the twenty-first of August, 50 landowners had contacted the S.C.S. for C.C.C. work on their farms (Agreements For, 1935; Way To, 1935).

The C.C.C. men, while ready to work, found themselves lacking appropriate equipment. By mid-September four farms were ready for work, but the enrollees had only shovels to perform their tasks. An expected shipment of other equipment such as wheelbarrows, picks, bars, rock hammers, and other miscellaneous tools failed to materialize. Project Supervisor Clausen stated, "We can't start work until we get something to work with" (CCC Work Start, 1935, p. 1). Even without the missing tools, work began on September 22. Clausen organized six crews of 22 enrollees. A junior foreman supervised the individual crews (CCC Work Start, 1935; Tools Not, 1935). The first farms to receive C.C.C. labor in the Clinton area included

The Jess Dewees farm, 8 1-2 miles northeast of Clinton; Jess Stratton farm, north of Clinton; Mrs. Neita Webb farm, three miles north of Clinton; G.D. Resler farm, 8 miles northwest of Clinton; and the Fred Howell farm east of Clinton. (Tools Not, p. 1)

By September 22, 2,400 acres was under S.C.S. contract for Company 2826 labor (Tools Not, 1935).

L.L. Swim replaced Clausen as project supervisor in October 1935. Under Clausen's supervision the C.C.C. men completed work on five Clinton area farms. The S.C.S. transferred Clausen to the Duncan, Oklahoma C.C.C. camp. As Swim, former S.C.S. supervisor at the Stillwater C.C.C. camp, took over as supervisor at Camp Church, 5,000 additional acres of contracted agreements awaited Company 2826 work. After spending only little more than one month in the camp, the S.C.S. transferred Swim to the

Broken Arrow C.C.C. camp. His replacement, George L. Neblett, project supervisor at the Stillwater C.C.C. camp for the previous 14 months, took over on November 24 (Local CCC, 1935; Neblett Assumes, 1935; Neblett Is, 1935; Stillwater Man, 1935).

Upon arriving in Clinton Neblett, a World War veteran holding the rank of Captain in the Army Reserve, immediately formed a committee of local conservation supporters. Concerned with the potential loss of the camp, Neblett stressed the need for the company to obtain tractors and graders for terrace construction work. The county commissioners agreed to provide two terracing rigs. The C.C.C. would provide a third. The three tractors would allow the C.C.C. enrollees to proceed with the contracted farm work at a far greater pace. By early December 102 farmers had placed 21,720 acres under S.C.S. contract for C.C.C. erosion control work (CCC Soil Work, 1935; Group Secures, 1935; Neblett Assumes, 1935; Neblett Became, 1936).

During early 1936 the pace of C.C.C. erosion control work in the Clinton area slowed due to cold weather. The cold weather froze the soil hindering terracing work. In January the S.C.S. restricted the camp's work program area. In the future only projects located within ten miles of Camp Church would be undertaken by the C.C.C. Still the boys conducted much useful work in the early days of 1936. By April Company 2826 had planted 130,000 trees on area farms (Camp's Area, 1936; CCC Camp Work, 1936; Summer Terrace, 1936; Trees Effective).

In June 1936 the S.C.S. transferred Neblett and replaced him with Grant B. Grumbine. The S.C.S. transferred Grumbine, the former president of Northwestern State Teachers College, and a former mathematics teacher at Oklahoma A and M, from his position as project superintendent of the Rush Springs camp (Neblett Moved, 1936).

Under Neblett's supervision the soil conservation work of the Company 2826 men continued. The S.C.S. added two new duties in the summer of 1936. The enrollees began a program of distributing poisoned bran to fight the unusually large numbers of grasshoppers in the area. The S.C.S. also allowed area farmers to use C.C.C. labor for the cleaning and repairing of wells and springs (CCC Aid, 1936; CCC Youths Are, 1936; Many Farmers, 1936).

The S.C.S. replaced Grumbine in January 1937 with T.A. Smith. Transferred from Kansas, Smith had supervised similar camps for the past three years (New Supervisor, 1937; Smith Named, 1936). While continuing the standard soil conservation program, under Smith's supervision the focus of the C.C.C. work shifted slightly. The S.C.S. directed the C.C.C. men to plant over 100,000 trees during the winter months. The service also increased the pace of C.C.C. farm pond construction work (CCC Will Start, 1936). By the end of 1936 the Company 2826 men had completed an impressive amount of work. The *Clinton Daily News* reported

The CCC youths have built 26 temporary dams and 22 permanent dams, with 11,669 square yards of bank stopping. Rodent control work has been done on 90 acres. Sixteen stock ponds for water supply have been built or are under construction. Spillways and riprapping have been added to completed dams. Trees planted on 72 acres number more than 200,000. The varieties of trees already planted are principally black locust, honey locust, bois d'arc and American elms. Approximately 200,000 more are to be planted this winter. (Report Reveals, 1936, p. 1)

By 1937 the S.C.S. replaced Smith with W.E. Collet. Collet continued to supervise Company 2826 until the closure of Camp Church in 1942. Under Collet's supervision the now familiar pattern of soil conservation work continued uninterrupted. A former Company 2826 enrollee described the soil conservation work as "hard." He recalled that the young Camp Church men "all had shiny shovels" from constant use (Co. 2826 Enrollee A, personal communication, September 15, 2003; National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1938a, 1940a, 1941a).

### **Community Relations**

Clinton civic clubs established an early positive relationship with Company 2826. In November 1935 the Clinton Kiwanis club held a meeting at Camp Church. The club members lunched on standard C.C.C. fare. After the noon meal enrollees presented a program and the Kiwanians took a tour of the camp (C.C.C. Boys Will, 1935). In March 1936 a group of "Clinton business and professional men" treated the enrollees to a "special meal" at the camp. The civic leaders organized the dinner to commemorate the first use of the camp's 216 new forks, spoons, knives, and plates. Until March the enrollees dined with Army mess kits (Special Dinner, 1936, p. 1).

The newly arrived Company 2826 project superintendent, Grant Grumbine, spoke at a June 1936 gathering of the Clinton Rotary club. He praised the work of the C.C.C. in molding the lives of the young enrollees.

Many of the enrollees at the camp never learned the value of regular habits and good physical care...At the camp the boys must learn how to be punctual and on time, eat and sleep at regular hours, and pass rigid physical inspections.

Grumbine also told the gathered Rotarians of the benefits of enrollee payment allotments to needy families, and the value of the soil conservation program carried on by the young men (CCC Fills, 1936, p. 1). Throughout the remainder of Company 2826's time at Camp Church, Clinton civic clubs maintained a strong presence in camp activities, and vice versa (CCC Assembly, 1939; CCC Camp Host, 1937; CCC Education, 1939; Guidance Talks, 1940)

Just as with the Wichita Mountains and Quartz Mountain camps, Clinton's Camp Church hosted open houses each April in commemoration of the founding of the C.C.C. Company 2826's first open house on April 19, 1936, coincided with the third anniversary of the Corps. From 2:30 PM to 5:00 PM, several hundred visitors toured the camp. Camp administrators and enrollees guided the public on a tour of the camp's facilities (Camp Program Well, 1936; Local Camp Observes, 1936; Open House To, 1936). The camp hosted a second 1936 open house with less fanfare in December. Approximately 300 area residents came to the camp for tours and explanations of camp activities (300 Present, 1936). The 1937 open house, commemorating the fourth anniversary of the founding of the C.C.C., was not as well attended. Despite inclement weather 200 people attended the open house and were treated to the standard tours and explanations of activities (200 Visitors, 1937).

Heightened levels of community involvement were evident during the April 1938 Camp Church open house. In addition to free donuts and coffee, the Clinton Chamber of Commerce band would present a concert. Camp commander Eagan expected 2,000 visitors to enjoy the food, concert, and camp tours (2,000 To, 1938). The 1939, sixth C.C.C. anniversary Clinton open house featured an American Legion drum and bugle

corps concert and march. Camp personnel served free coffee and donuts and led tours of the camp (CCC Program Is, 1939). On a somber note, the 1940 Camp Church open house featured the planting of a tree at Clinton's McLain Rogers Park in honor of recently deceased C.C.C. Director Fechner. Tours, coffee, and donuts were again on the agenda for the 300 visitors to the camp. The 1941 open house involved no special programs and received little attention in the *Clinton Daily News* (Camp Openhouse, 1940; CCC Openhouse Is, 1940; Clinton CCC Camp To, 1941; 300 Attend, 1940).

In addition to presenting civic club programs and hosting open houses, the men of Company 2826 interacted with the local public through their widely popular musical program. Throughout 1936 and 1937 the Camp Church men's chorus, under the direction of Educational Adviser Veasey, presented musical programs in area churches, schools, parks, and radio stations (CCC Choir, 1937; CCC Chorus Goes, 1936; CCC Chorus Will, 1936; CCC Youths to, 1936; Sing To, 1937). In December 1936, 40 C.C.C. men, now known as the "Symphonians" (Music Group, 1937, p. 1) presented a "Christmas choral" entitled "The Gift" (CCC Program, 1936, p. 1) at the Clinton High School auditorium to the general public. The Clinton Kiwanis and Business and Professional Women's clubs sponsored the event (CCC Program; Choral Will, 1936).

The work of the Camp Church men found great favor with many local residents. Clinton area farmers were among the staunchest supporters of the men of Company 2826 (County Farmers Say, 1936, p. B6). Finding the C.C.C. soil conservation program the "greatest permanent program ever undertaken," Clinton farmers provided brief testimonials to the work of the camp in the April 19, 1936, Special CCC Edition of the *Clinton Daily News*.



J.O. Dickey: I think that the soil conservation program and work done by the CCC camp is the greatest work that has ever been done by the government for permanent benefit to the farms and farming classes in this country. It will take a few years before the people will realize its real value. Every farm owner should get his farm terraced while the CCC camp is here to assist and supervise the work. I believe that it will increase the value and income on his farm by at least 35 per cent.

Jess Dewees: I think the soil-conservation program that is being carried out through the CCC camp is the greatest program the government is sponsoring today. The soil conservation work has done a world of constructive work on my farm and I hope this type of work will be continued.

Chester Kaiser: The soil conservation service and the CCC boys are doing a great piece of work. The value of my farm has been increased 50 per cent since they have established the 10-point program on it.

Jess Stratton: The contour farming that I did last year increased my yields materially and proved to me that running rows up and down the hill does not pay.

(County Farmers Say, 1936, p. B6)

The Clinton area farmers actively worked for the protection of Camp SCS-5. When talk of the closure of the camp began in early 1940, 125 Clinton area farmers wrote letters to Congressman Massingale urging him to fight for the Clinton camp. Camp Church escaped closure in that episode (C.C.C. Camp Closure, 1940; Clinton Happy; Farmers Seek, 1940).

Even though the vast majority of Company 2826 interactions with the community were positive, not all were. Only a few weeks after the creation of the camp the Clinton Police Department arrested an enrollee. The young man had fought with another youth on Frisco Avenue across the street from City Hall. Witnesses told the officers that the enrollee had not started the fight. The police ultimately cleared him from charges (CCC Youth Freed, 1935). In early December 1935 the police arrested a C.C.C. enrollee on charges on resisting arrest, theft, and drunkenness. Police discovered the youth with a “dressed chicken and three other articles he had allegedly stolen” (CCC Enrollee Faces, 1935, p. 1).

A more serious incident rang in New Year’s Eve 1936 at Camp Church. After imbibing in alcohol, a pair of Clinton enrollees beat a third with fists and a steel chair. The victim, cared for in the camp infirmary, sustained serious injuries including a broken nose, and a gashed head requiring stitches and a drain. The District Attorney filed felonious assault charges against one attacker and assault and battery charges against the other. In the end one youth served 15 days in jail and while the second served only 5 (Fight At, 1936; Two CCC Youth, 1936; Youth To Face, 1936). The *Clinton Daily News* reported a final criminal incident in 1939. The Clinton Police Department arrested two Company 2826 enrollees at the request of Camp Church officials. Apparently the two young men had stolen C.C.C. property and were “away without leave” (Two Boys, p. 1).

Throughout Company 2826’s time in Clinton, traffic problems occasionally occurred. Only weeks after the enrollees reported for duty the *Clinton Daily News* reported on the first such situation. In compliance with standard policy, the C.C.C. required all vehicles to stop at railroad crossings. This action apparently caused

consternation among some Clinton citizens. Camp educational adviser Frederick, explained, “Motorists who ‘cuss’ CCC company trucks for stopping at grade crossings, and lots of them do, are just wasting so much breath” (CCC Trucks, 1935, p. 1). In October 1941 a C.C.C. truck driver received a three-dollar fine for failing to yield and causing a collision with an automobile (Truck Driver, 1941).

As a whole the Clinton area welcomed the C.C.C. In a 1939 article commemorating the work of the Company 2826 enrollees, the *Clinton Daily News* claimed

No one knows what might have been built on the camp grounds if the camp had not been located here, or whether anything would have been there except that barren expanse of ground, but one thing is fairly certain, the ground could not have been utilized to better advantage, either for Clinton or for the boys and those who receive the aid of the camp activities. (CCC Camp Proves, 1939, p. 1)

A September 1939 *Clinton Daily News* editorial furthered this thought. The editor stated We, in and near Clinton, know that the C.C.C. boys and their superiors have been doing a wonderful work....It is a wonderful story, we think, and one which ought to close out what arguments there still may be against making the C.C.C. a permanent organization – at least until everybody in this country who wants a job with private industry has one. (The C.C.C., 1939)

Clinton citizens took pride in the appearance of Camp Church. The April 1939, *Clinton Daily News* article celebrating the work of the Clinton C.C.C. company praised the aesthetics of the campground.

Appearance of the camp is such that no enrollee or staff member has to apologize or bow to any section of the city in neatness and beauty. Every man connected with the camp in any way is proud of the trees, flower beds, shrubs, bordered rock walks and grass, all constructed and planted by the enrollees and members of the army and technical staffs. At the present time, and for nearly two years, the Clinton camp has been rated as one of the most beautiful in the nation, not excepting those in the scenic mountain sectors. (CCC Camp Proves, 1939, p. 1)

In the last and greatest example of widespread community involvement in Camp Church activities, civic leaders threw themselves into preparation for the July 16, 1941, visit to Camp SCS-5 by Dr. Hugh H. Bennett, the Chief of the Soil Conservation Service. The purpose of Bennett's visit was to attend Clinton's Soil Conservation and Youth Day. The focus of the program involved the young men of Company 2826 demonstrating 11 different soil conservation practices to approximately 1,000 people on the Gust Lenaburg farm located directly south of Camp Church. Numerous dignitaries including Bennett, the Oklahoma Lt. Governor, the Oklahoma Highway Commissioner, the Oklahoma Attorney General, and another Dr. Bennett, the President of Oklahoma A and M College, attended the event (About 1,000, 1941; National Soil, 1941).

### **The Camp Closes**

By mid-November 1941, the future of Camp Church appeared uncertain (Civic Officials, 1941). With the onset of war in the Pacific, conditions at Camp Church changed rapidly. December 8, 1941, the day following the Japanese attack on U.S. forces in the Pacific, four enrollees left for U.S. Coast Guard examinations, while one left to sit for Army Air Corps testing. Camp commander Hand urged his young charges to remain

steady. He stated, "I've just told the boys to keep calm and stand by for instructions" (Four CCC Youths, 1941, p. 2). By the next day he reported, "My boys are getting awfully restless and wanting to join up now." Hand indicated that the district C.C.C. headquarters had not issued any orders "as to what procedure to follow in organizing the local camp for its role in the U.S. – Japanese war" (Anxious To, 1941, p. 1).

On December 21 the *Clinton Daily News* reported that Camp Church would remain open until at least March 31, 1942 (CCC Camp Again, 1941). In the formal order received on January 5, the S.C.S. ordered the camp to remain "profitably employed until March 31 and to make an effort to complete all outstanding government obligations by that time" (Formal Order, 1942, p. 1). Even with closure imminent, Camp SCS-5 inducted four new enrollees on January 25 (County Youths Enroll, 1942). On March 5 the total Company 2826 strength stood at 111 enrollees (CCC Camp Here, 1942). By April the camp was empty (Now What, 1942). The final commander of Camp Church left for Ruidoso, New Mexico, in mid-April. While doubtful that he would remain long in New Mexico, Hand would serve as co-commander of the Ruidoso C.C.C. camp (Lt. Hand, 1942).

Summing up his experience in the Clinton Camp during the early 1940's, a former enrollee stated that the C.C.C. "was a good thing." He further enthused

It was a real good thing to get the young boys off the street and get them a job. It was one of the best things that ever happened back then for the young men. I didn't regret it at all. (Co. 2826 Enrollee A, personal communication, September 15, 2003)

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Youth is Badly Burned in Custer Harvest Mishap. (1937, June 27). *Clinton Daily News*. p. 1.

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## CHAPTER VI

### **The Civilian Conservation Corps as a Means of Social Control**

In a note discussing his March 31, 1933, address to Congress, F.D.R. spoke of the two underlying purposes of the newly proposed C.C.C.

Both to save a generation of upright and eager young men and to help save and restore our threatened natural resources, I had determined even before Inauguration to take as many of these young men as we could off the city street corners and place them in the woods at healthful employment and sufficient wage so that their families might also be benefited by their employment. (Rosenman, 1938, p. 82)

Through the C.C.C. the President hoped to reclaim both wasted land and wasted American youth. The execution of this grand feat was, however, primarily left to others. The pressing business of leading a nation through the Great Depression demanded too much time to allow F.D.R. the luxury of plotting the course of his beloved C.C.C. with the degree of detail he initially desired. Following the formation of the C.C.C. Advisory Council, the individual cabinet level department secretaries in conjunction with Director Fechner became instrumental in the development of C.C.C. policy. Each involved department contributed to the organization and administration of the Corps (Fechner, 1938; McEntee, 1940; Saalberg, 1962; Salmond, 1967; Wirth, 1980). These individual departments worked toward the goals of conserving the American land and youth established by F.D.R. for the C.C.C. in their own ways and with their own interests in mind. Through the implementation of policy, many theorists have claimed that various

governmental bodies used the C.C.C. or similar earlier work relief projects as means of social control (Germic, 2001; Gorham, 1992; Pandiani, 1982; Stieglitz, 1997, 2001).

The President himself was the first to use the C.C.C. as a means of solving an executive problem. Much as Germic (2001) claims nineteenth century large-scale park construction projects were used to avert urban rebellion, the C.C.C. park and conservation projects of the twentieth century served a similar function. As F.D.R. took office in March 1933, rebellion was a real possibility in the U.S. Harold Ickes wrote of a troubling conversation at a Washington, D.C., dinner party on April 13, 1933:

I was struck with the pessimism of Senator (Burton K.) Wheeler and Senator (Elbert D.) Thomas. They both think the economic situation is getting worse rapidly and they look for a very serious situation unless something is done speedily. In this connection, a very large and comprehensive public works program was suggested, and the immediate embarking on such a program was urged as of vital necessity. Senator Thomas made the statement that the concentration camps now being set up for the men engaged in reforestation under the act recently passed (Public, No. 5, An Act for the relief of unemployment through the performance of useful public work, and for other purposes) might be found to have served as concentration camps for men marching against the Government, unless the situation improved rapidly. He also made the statement that in case of any serious outbreaks, those marching against the Government would not be headed by rioters but by Ph.D.'s and the educated classes. He pointed out that a great proportion of the educated classes were out of jobs at this time, more so than on any other occasion. (Ickes, 1953, p. 21)

The potential for open rebellion surfaced a month later. In early May, 1933, discontented World War One veterans began forming in Washington, D.C. for a second Bonus March. These Bonus Expeditionary Force marchers were intent upon regaining veteran benefits lost with the passage of F.D.R.'s March 1933 Economy Act. They also hoped to force the rapid payment of the World War Bonus. Newspapers noted that approximately 10,000 veterans would be present. Bonus march leaders called for the participants to fight and resist the police. Kenneth Davis (1986) called the situation, "a social bomb which, in view of the passions then being fanned among war veterans by the government economy drive, could have dangerously exploded" (p. 78).

Marchers began arriving in Washington on May 9. In response to the threat posed by this massive group of World War I veterans, F.D.R. moved to include veterans in the newly formed C.C.C. On May 11, F.D.R. issued Executive Order No. 6129 authorizing the enrollment of 25,000 veterans into the C.C.C. The order allowed veterans, with "an average age of 40 in 1933" (Salmond, 1967, p. 36) entrance into the C.C.C. without the age and marriage restrictions applying to other enrollees (Saalberg, 1962; Salmond).

Bonus marchers nearest the capital were the first to be enrolled in this organization that previously admitted unmarried young men of ages 18 to 25 only. F.D.R.'s actions resolved the conflict. The veteran enrollees were selected on a state quota system like the junior enrollees. However, the Veteran's Administration rather than the Department of Labor selected the veterans. Other accommodations were made as well. While the C.C.C. required junior enrollees to pass interviews and physical examinations, the veteran enrollees were "often impaired in bodily health and mental stability by their period of privation and hopelessness" (Salmond, 1967, p. 36). By May

22 the crisis was over. Over 2,600 of the Bonus Expeditionary Force marchers enrolled in the C.C.C. before dispersing (Davis, 1986; Holland & Hill, 1974; Saalberg, 1962; Salmond; Schlesinger, 1958; Stott, 2001). Schlesinger states “in two weeks most of the veterans went affably into the Civilian Conservation Corps, and the Second B.E.F. had met a painless Waterloo” (p. 15).

Veteran enrollees performed much useful work in the C.C.C. Veteran companies, housed in their own camps, performed standard C.C.C. duties, modified to meet the demands of their physical condition and age. The C.C.C. became a therapeutic center for many enrollees. Salmond (1967) claims that the veteran camps were

A place where they could regain health and self-respect. Here they received a second chance, an opportunity to gain the knowledge, skill, or confidence they needed to earn a decent living. For others, it was a permanent home....The CCC was...proof that some people yet remembered their sacrifice in 1917-1918. (p. 37)

By the end of the nine year C.C.C. period more than 225,000 veterans served enlistment periods. Thus the C.C.C. served in the short term as a means to suppress a potential veteran-led rebellion and in the long term as a rehabilitative program allowing numerous veterans the means to readjust to their peacetime lives. As Salmond states “once again the CCC had been used to resolve a troublesome situation” (p. 15).

Pandiani (1982) identifies the C.C.C.’s role in another form of social control, the reduction of crime in Depression-era America. He claims the C.C.C. intentionally removed young men from the general population and placed them far from their homes in unpopulated areas. Calling the camps “the functional equivalent of a prison,” Pandiani

claims, “Without bars, guards or coercion large numbers of potential criminals were effectively removed from the population at large and from the opportunity to engage in crime” (p. 350). While acknowledging the fact that little evidence exists to support the thesis that C.C.C. administrators intended for the Corps to function as an agent of crime control, Pandiani implies as much. He claims F.D.R. at a minimum understood this role of the C.C.C., but rarely acknowledged it publicly out of fear of opposition from the political left.

Department of Labor selection policies seem to argue against an intentional crime control function for the C.C.C. Aside from a few disagreements, Fechner and Persons, the Department of Labor C.C.C. Advisory Council Representative, generally agreed on selection policy throughout their association. Fechner’s problems with the Department of Labor tended to center on what he perceived as the selection of poorly suited enrollees at the local and state levels. He endeavored to convince the local selection agents that the C.C.C. was not “to be regarded as a dumping ground for delinquency cases, parolees, or youths who were obviously under seventeen years” (Salmond, 1967, p. 83). For their part, the federal C.C.C. selection office sent frequent letters to local selection agents encouraging them to enroll high quality young men. It was explained that by selecting young men unable to adapt to camp life who would quickly be removed from the Corps, the selection officers were creating a financial loss to the government and the local communities (Salmond). Both Fechner and Persons seem to have actively avoided placing youths of questionable moral character in the camps.

In 1941 the Governor of Oklahoma hotly disputed the effectiveness of the crime control function of the C.C.C. During a November address at an Oklahoma Future

Farmers of America banquet, Governor Phillips claimed that of the many pardon requests he received from the Granite Reformatory, none came from former Future Farmers of America members while fully one-third were from former National Youth Administration or C.C.C. members. He repeated his claims during the April 1942, U.S. Senate hearings on the abolishment of the C.C.C. The Governor's actions brought down the wrath of parents, politicians, influential citizens, and leaders of the C.C.C. and N.Y.A. (CCC Ruins, 1942; Cheek to Johnson, 1942; Martin to Johnson, 1942; NYA Records, 1942; Phillips' NYA, 1942; Phillips Sees, 1941; Phillips' Statement, 1942). C.C.C. Director McEntee called the statement a "dastardly insult to the young people of Oklahoma just as it is a vicious libel, stated without facts to substantiate it, upon three million young men who have served in the CCC" (Phillips Statement, p. 1). In a letter to Congressman Johnson decrying Phillips' "unwarranted attack upon the NYA and the CCC," Tom Cheek, the President of the Oklahoma Farmers Union claimed, "In my opinion the Governor would have had a great deal more trouble in the Granite Reformatory had it not have been for the CCC and NYA (Cheek to Johnson).

Though perhaps not intentionally designed, the crime control function of the corps was evident in the southwest Oklahoma camps. While speaking of the need for the reinstatement of the C.C.C. in the present day U.S., a former Company 870 enrollee remarked, "You wouldn't be building prisons if they had (the C.C.C.)" (Co. 870 Enrollee A, personal communication, September 12, 2003). A former Company 2826 enrollee concurred. While acknowledging an occasional fight in the camps, he claimed no knowledge of any other crimes committed by enrollees during his time in the Clinton Camp. Emphasizing the C.C.C.'s role in preventing crime, he stated the Corps



Was a good thing. It was a real good thing to get the young boys off the street and get them a job. It was one of the best things that ever happened back then for the young men. I didn't regret it at all. (Co. 2826 Enrollee A, personal communication, September 15, 2003)

Viewing the C.C.C. through the lens of Michel Foucault's writings, political scientist Eric Gorham (1992) states the C.C.C. served as a means to normalize enrollees. He claims this was done in several ways. One was by placing the young enrollees in rural camps far from their homes. Gorham states

The 'nature' of the camps placed them well away from cities, but the rural locations also served as a means of social control, and forced each camp to become self-sufficient in many areas. The agency purposely assigned enrollees to camps relatively far from their homes in order to discourage Awols. (p. 234)

While true in many cases, it certainly was not in southwestern Oklahoma. The young men typically stationed in the Clinton, Quartz Mountain, and Wichita Mountains camps were from surrounding counties. Area newspapers regularly ran stories on the assignment of local young men to area camps. Three of the four enrollees interviewed in this study worked in camps located in their home counties. One enrollee was from an adjacent county (Co. 870 Enrollee A, personal communication, September 12, 2003; Co. 870 Enrollee B, personal communication, September 24, 2003; Co. 2826 Enrollee A, personal communication, September 15, 2003; Co. 2826 Enrollee B, personal communication, September 17, 2003; CCC Enrollment Slated, 1937; 50 County, 1940; Things Are, 1936). Even the claim of the rural nature of the camps fails in this instance. While the Quartz Mountain and Wichita Mountains camps were relatively remote, the

C.C.C. established Camp Church immediately adjacent to a residential neighborhood on the southern edge of Clinton, close enough for the city government to supply water, sewage, and trash services (CCC Camp, 1935; Clinton Tract, 1935).

Furthermore, Gorham claims the C.C.C. rarely gave the boys an opportunity to experience free time or have a say in their activities in order to indoctrinate them into “industrial time” (p. 236). He cites the typical C.C.C. week day schedule of work and educational courses as evidence. Testimony from former Company 870 and 2826 enrollees disputes this claim as well. While Gorham implies that three and one-half hours of the enrollees’ evenings involved mandatory educational work, a former Camp Church enrollee recalled that he did not take any course work during his year in Company 2826 (Co. 2826 Enrollee A, personal communication, September 15, 2003). A former Company 870 enrollee made a similar claim of never attending an educational course during his two years as a member of Camp Elm Island. He further claimed that the education program was unpopular and most men did not take part (Co. 870 Enrollee A, personal communication, September 12, 2003). Another Company 870 enrollee recalled taking only one educational course at Camp Elm Island. He stated that the Company 870 educational program was “voluntary” and not everyone chose to participate (Co. 870 Enrollee B, personal communication, September 24, 2003). As further evidence disputing Gorham’s claim of no free time, a former Camp Church enrollee stated most week nights the Company 2826 men would walk into Clinton and “go downtown and get a hamburger. We just had to let (the camp administration) know we were going to go but that was all right” (Co. 2826 Enrollee A, personal communication, September 15, 2003).

Building upon Gorham's work, German historian Olaf Stieglitz has developed several theories regarding the implementation of the C.C.C. as a measure of social control. He claims the Corps functioned to socially integrate the young enrollees. Stieglitz believes this process of "democracy training" (1997, p. 186) occurred partially through the camp educational systems. Stieglitz claims that, though never mandatory, the vast majority of C.C.C. camps offered regular courses on citizenship for the enrollees (1997). A check of camp inspection reports for the entire period of operations for the five camps included in this study reveals that Stieglitz's claim is not completely born out in southwestern Oklahoma. The administrators of Company 2810 did not ever offer a course in citizenship during the entire period of their involvement, 1935 to 1939, at Camp SP-16, Quartz Mountain State Park. At Camp Church the C.C.C. offered the young men of Company 2826 a course in citizenship only once in the six and one-half years of its operation in Clinton. This course was only offered in 1941, shortly before the termination of the program. In the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge findings were similar. The administrators of Camp F-2, Buffalo Springs, never offered a citizenship course to the Company 812 enrollees. Similarly, Camp F-5, Panther Creek, never provided the young men of Company 859 with a citizenship course. Only during two of the over eight years of Company 870's time in the Wichita Mountains, did the administrators of Camp F-4, Elm Island, offer citizenship courses. In both 1934 and 1935 a F.E.R.A. supplied teacher taught the course. The 1934 citizenship class met 11 times with an average attendance of 19 enrollees. In 1935 the class met eight times with an average attendance of 11. These numbers were relatively low in light of the fact that during this period Company 870 regularly boasted between 180-190 men. It appears that

citizenship training received little emphasis in the southwestern Oklahoma camps (National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1933a; 1934a; 1935a; 1936a; 1937a; 1938a; 1939a; 1940a; 1941a).

Stieglitz (2001) claims the U.S. government utilized the C.C.C. as a means of helping create a utopian society. Citing Eleanor Roosevelt's concerns about the young people of the 1930s, Stieglitz claims F.D.R. created the C.C.C. in order to reach this goal. He argues that this program involved several components. One was a "work-guided confrontation with nature" that held a "patriotic value" for the young C.C.C. men (p. 417). This position is born out in the southwestern Oklahoma camps. Numerous references to the value of hard work for the enrollees are evident in newspaper accounts from the Quartz Mountain, Clinton, and Wichita Mountains areas (CCC Fills, 1936; Lawton Group, 1935; Things Are, 1936).

The topic of militarization of the C.C.C. remained contentious throughout its existence. As such, government officials intentionally obscured the role of the military in the C.C.C. throughout the lifespan of the Corps. Initially, the C.C.C. and the military took great care to downplay the role of the Army in the camps. Fearing the public's reaction to the militarization of American youth in the Corps, F.D.R. in a radio address on May 7, 1933, stated, "This group of men have entered upon their work on a purely voluntary basis, no military training is involved..." (Rosenman, 1938, p. 161). In 1938, first C.C.C. Director Fechner claimed

The CCC camps are not militarized but they do have organization and discipline. There are no military drills, no military instruction – no saluting. There are no military regulations – no hard-boiled officers....There are no sergeants or

corporals in the CCC company organization as there are in the company organization of the Army. All of these positions are held by enrollees who have been promoted from the ranks to places of responsibility. (pp. 32-33)

The pattern of denial of Corps militarization continued after Fechner's death in 1939. In 1940 second C.C.C. Director McEntee stated

There are no rifles in the CCC camps. There is no military drill. The young men in the CCC camps are not given military training with rifles and bayonets but they do receive training which would be of great value to them and the Nation in time of national emergency. (p. 36)

The Corps was so sensitive to the topic of militarization that in 1934 Fechner and the C.C.C. Advisory Council voted unanimously to reject an offer by the National Rifle Association to provide free weapons and ammunition for the purposes of allowing enrollees to engage in recreational target shooting (Johnson 1972, Putnam, 1973; Saalberg, 1962). Official C.C.C. informational booklets of the period made clear the Corps' stance on the militarization of the camps (Emergency Conservation Work, 1937; Emergency Conservation Work, undated). This policy of official denial of military training in the C.C.C. continued unabated until the onset of American involvement in World War II. Even though the military and the C.C.C. expended much effort in this public relations campaign, the militarization of the Corps remained a heated topic until the end of the program (Putnam; Sherraden, 1981).

In southwest Oklahoma this program of denial was obvious. Military officials, C.C.C. selection agents, and various Corps officials made numerous statements denying the militarization of the camps. These C.C.C. affiliated officials denied that the Corps

utilized military discipline and provided enrollees military training. At times they sought to dispel public concerns that enrollment in the C.C.C. would lead to enlistment in the armed forces during wartime conditions. These claims appeared throughout the entire C.C.C. period in the *Lawton Constitution*, the *Altus Times-Democrat*, and the *Clinton Daily News* (Altus Camp, 1937; Ban On, 1936; CCC Enrollees Won't, 1939; CCC Enrollment 1939; CCC Explained, 1934; CCC Youths, 1941; Plateau Will, 1935; Youths Oppose, 1937).

Even though the military downplayed their involvement in the Corps, they did receive a multitude of dividends. The thousands of military officers involved in the administration of individual camps provided the United States with a cadre of officers experienced in leading men (Putnam 1973, Saalberg, 1962; Salmond, 1967). Saalberg, a U.S. Army World War II veteran, states that after the Army replaced regular officers with reserve officers as C.C.C. camp commanders in 1933

Direct control over the camps passed into hands of a group of young officers who, for the most part, were graduates of civilian colleges and universities, and who generally held values more in common with American society than with the professional officers whom they supplanted. This subtle, but significant change was completely overlooked by the small vocal group of American liberals who continued to condemn Army management of the camps, even by citizen-soldiers as dangerously militaristic. (Saalberg, 1962, p. 54)

C.C.C. experience tended to increase leadership skills in company officers. Military officers tasked with supervising C.C.C. companies lacked the wide powers of the Articles of War in their dealings with enrollees. In their leadership of the young

C.C.C. men, the officers learned to rely upon personal characteristics such as sympathy, understanding, and personality instead of the traditional military reliance on the Articles of War (Johnson, 1972, p. 147). The general quality of C.C.C. military leadership was evident in the southwest Oklahoma camps. Former enrollees from Company 2826 in Clinton and Company 870 in the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge reveal that these Oklahoma C.C.C. men widely respected and admired their camp commanders (Co. 870 Enrollee A, personal communication, September 12, 2003; Co. 870 Enrollee B, personal communication, September 24, 2003; Co. 2826 Enrollee A, personal communication, September 15, 2003; Co. 2826 Enrollee B, personal communication, September 17, 2003).

The benefits of involvement in the C.C.C. for the military were not limited to the training of officers. The enrollees themselves became an asset to the armed forces. Soon after the formation of the C.C.C., Major General Johnson Hagood (1934) of the U.S. Army expounded upon the benefits of the Corps for the military. He wrote of the ease with which an enrollee could become a soldier.

For a man to be a soldier he must be able to shoot, to march and to obey. The C.C.C. boy can march. He is loyal and obedient to his superiors. If need be, he can be taught to use a weapon – in a very short space of time.... Here is the makings of three hundred thousand soldiers. Young men of high character. Men that can take care of themselves in the woods, hands hardened to the pick and shovel, feet hardened to the road, nerves and muscles that respond to the word of command – men who know how to handle the Army ration, who understand the rules of military hygiene, the laws of sanitation. Trained in the vocations of

peace, they are ready for the vocations of war. Mobilized by professional soldiers, they now are commanded by the Officers of the Reserve Corps – civilians like themselves. The Civilian Conservation Corps stands square with the National Defense. (p. 105)

A veteran of C.C.C. Company 870 stationed in the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge at Camp Elm Island from 1939 to 1941 provided useful insights into the role of the military in the C.C.C. from the perspective of the enrollee. This enrollee served in the U.S. Army during World War II as a drill instructor in a basic training camp. He found that his time in Company 870 helped prepare him for Army service. He stated, “I always felt like they were getting us ready to go into the military.” This two year C.C.C. veteran commented on the Corps role in preparing him for military service. He claimed, “I was just more accustomed to the military discipline, how to cope with men. [The Army recruits with no C.C.C. experience] were just coming out of the cities and off the farms and they had never been in. That was quite a shock going into basic training and the harassment, they harassed you a lot, but they were feeling you out” (Co. 870 Enrollee A, personal communication, September 12, 2003).

The former Wichita Mountains enrollee recalled numerous elements from his time at Camp Elm Island that eased his entry into the U.S. Army of World War II.

We made retreat of the afternoon in front of the flag...we just stood at attention.... And we had a uniform we wore. It was a khaki color, just like in the Army. We had a fatigue uniform, a blue one, that we wore in the field. They did give you an honorable discharge or a dishonorable discharge, and back then a dishonorable discharge was a no-no....You had to get up and make your bed up



Army style and scrub the floors, mop the thing, G.I. it.... We was ready for the Army when we went in because we had already been through it. (Co. 870 Enrollee A, personal communication, September 12, 2003)

The former Company 870 enrollee likened C.C.C. discipline to that found in the Army. Speaking of Camp Elm Island discipline he stated

They had discipline there. They put you on extra duty, cleaning up the camp, picking up trash, working in the kitchen, K.P. You didn't have to do too much wrong to get on extra duty, or you might get your weekend pass pulled. They had a hammer on you, which was good. Those kids, they needed that....You were under articles, kind of like the Articles of War, and that was how they kept discipline in the camps. (Co. 870 Enrollee A, personal communication, September 12, 2003)

Another former Company 870 enrollee who served at Camp Elm Island from July 1939, to October 1940, recalled similar disciplinary techniques. Though he never received punishment during his time in camp, this enrollee remembered several instances involving other enrollees. According to this Elm Island man common Company 870 punishments included "K.P.," extra duty, restriction from leave, and lawn mowing (Co. 870 Enrollee B, personal communication, September 24, 2003).

A former Company 2826 enrollee recalled similar levels of discipline at the Clinton S.C.S. camp. He remembered engaging in military style close order drill near the campgrounds. He claimed, "The company officers thought it was a good idea to do close order drill." Their "excuses" for the marching drill centered on the beneficial outcomes associated with the exercise, but the former enrollee, who went on to serve in a U.S.

Navy Sea Bee Construction Battalion in the Pacific during World War II, believed the military had other intentions. He claimed the military intended for the C.C.C. close order drills to teach the enrollees “to not question authority.” The former C.C.C. man acknowledged the appropriateness of these policies. He stated, “It was all right. You have to have discipline” (Co. 2826 Enrollee B, personal communication, September 17, 2003).

In spite of his initial dislike, the former Camp Elm Island enrollee turned World War II U.S. Army drill instructor, similarly recognized the value of C.C.C. discipline in later years. He stated

You have to keep discipline. When they come from home and they have been babied, momma’s boys and things, they had to change your attitude altogether. And there is nothing wrong with it. It was harsh at first.... I thought it was bad then, but you know young boys don’t like discipline. We all thought it was bad and we tried to fight the system...but today I recommend it highly, highly, highly. I think we need a system like that now. (Co. 870 Enrollee A, personal communication, September 12, 2003)

Higher ranking C.C.C. officials also recognized the value of C.C.C. training for military preparedness. In his 1944 final report to Secretary of the Interior Ickes, C.C.C. Advisory Council Department of the Interior Representative Wirth (1944) spoke favorably of the role of the C.C.C. in mobilization for World War II. He stated

The work of the enrollees at camps on reclamation projects trained thousands of truck drivers and tractor operators. Elementary training in concrete and masonry construction, erection of frame structures, and the use and repair of hand tools

were standard on-job courses. No better training of nonmilitary character could have been given these young men to fit themselves for defending their country in the armed services or for participating in the vast civilian construction program initiated at the outbreak of the war” (p. 29).

C.C.C. Director McEntee agreed with Wirth’s assessment of the value of the average Corps enrollee to the military when he claimed,

As a rule a former CCC enrollee will have a head start on a young man of the same age who has not been in the Corps if he is called for service in the Army in event of war. The young man who has gone to a CCC camp has been improved in health and has learned how to take care of himself. He has learned from fifty to seventy-five per cent of the things he would need to know as a soldier. He has learned habits useful in peacetime, or any time. (1940, p. 36)

McEntee’s statement echoed an earlier claim made by General George Tyner, War Department Representative to the C.C.C. Advisory Council, that C.C.C. training was equal to 75 percent of that given to soldiers in the military (Wirth, 1980).

McEntee (1940) also stressed the similarities between the work performed by the C.C.C. and the Army Corps of Engineers. He stated, “Over 70 per cent of the jobs the CCC do are the same kinds that engineer troops perform in wartime” (p. 67). He stated that the skills learned by enrollees in the C.C.C. would assist greatly in meeting the manpower needs of a war-time military. In addition to mechanics, equipment operators, cooks, medics, and signal communicators, McEntee claimed

Many of the other activities of the CCC fit into the needs of national defense:  
Surveying and mapping, blueprint reading, carpentry, office and supply work,

dam construction, drainage, concrete and steel construction, gas and Diesel engine operation, drafting, use of explosives, welding, electrical wiring, fence construction and pipe line construction. (p. 66)

McEntee made this military value even more clear when he stated that an average enrollee, “Would be a valuable man to the nation in time of war. A man who can run a bulldozer can run a tank” (p. 49). Even the Secretary of War found the experience of the C.C.C. men of value in the war effort claiming that former enrollees were “hardened physically, have learned to live together as a Company in barracks, have respect for authority, and are potential soldiers of high caliber” (Wirth, 1980, p. 144).

The gradual increase in defense related training in the Corps as tensions in Europe increased became evident in southwestern Oklahoma newspapers of the period. A nationally syndicated editorial by Peter Edson printed in a May 1941 edition of the *Clinton Daily News* remarked on the increased military presence in the camps. Edson stated

The camps that CCC recruits go into now have a more military atmosphere than they did in the early years, for the program has been altered slightly to meet the defense effort requirements. There aren't any guns and there isn't any drill, but there are physical training exercises and there is heavy emphasis on schools. There are 176 full-time schools with an enrollment of over 3000 learning to be cooks and bakers, motor repairmen, radio men, clerks and subalterns who can direct camps themselves. There is no shortage of reserve officers to command camps as yet, but as these officers are called to active service they will be replaced by CCC-trained leaders. (Edson In, 1941, p. 2)

Even while maintaining a public image of indifference and denial, the U.S. military efficiently used the C.C.C. to its advantage in the training of men for war. As Salmond (1967) states

Immediately, to a country engaged in bloody war, (the C.C.C.) had provided the sinews of a military force. It had given young officers valuable training in command techniques, and the nearly three million young men who had passed through the camps had received experience of military life upon which the Army was well able to build (p. 221).

In addition to the value of enhanced officer leadership skills and well-trained potential soldiers, the C.C.C. provided the military with another valuable benefit. With war looming on the horizon, the C.C.C. reassigned most companies to defense related work on military posts (Wirth, 1980). In southwest Oklahoma the 1941 transfer of Company 870 from work in the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge to military projects at Fort Sill evidenced this action (CCC Company is On Defense Work, 1941). Wirth stated

In response to a request from the military, the CCC director approved assigning national-defense projects to camps on military reservations. By the first of the year 70 of the camps assigned to the various technical agencies either had relocated on military reservations or had their manpower there. The technical agencies continued to perform management functions in order to relieve the military of that additional work. Later the director, with the approval of the president, established a CCC victory war program whereby all CCC agencies cooperated with the army in every way possible. By the end of May 1942, there

were approximately 175 camps located on military reservations, and by late June the CCC was devoted completely to war-related projects. (1980, p. 144)

Politicians composed a final group that used the Civilian Conservation Corps to their advantage. For congressmen or senators, the gaining of C.C.C. camps in their districts could greatly increase their chances for re-election. Conversely, the loss of camps could mean their ouster from office. These requests for new camps typically took on the form of a letter to Director Fechner accompanied by letters from local leaders stressing the need for a new camp based upon unemployment data or the success of other area camps (Richardson, 1972; Salmond, 1967).

This type of political activity was readily apparent in southwest Oklahoma. With the formation of the C.C.C. in 1933 came a flurry of political activity centered around the idea of gaining a camp in the Wichita Mountains National Forest and Game Preserve. U.S. Congressman Jed Johnson and U.S. Senator Elmer Thomas worked tirelessly to secure a camp for the region. In numerous telegrams, letters, and personal visits to Lawton civic leaders, Forest Service administrators, C.C.C. administrators, and even the President, the two politicians pressed toward their goal (French to Thomas, 1933; Johnson to Lawton Constitution, 1933; Johnson to Peck, 1933; Roosevelt Signs, 1933; Work Camp is, 1933). Following the placement of Camp Buffalo Springs in the Preserve, political activity continued in several forms. Representative Johnson continued to press for increased project spending in the Wichita Mountains. In 1936, at the behest of the Lawton Chamber of Commerce, Senator Thomas wrote Director Fechner to protest the loss of Company 859 for the summer season and request additional camps for

Preserve (Fechner to Thomas, 1936; Gartrell to Thomas, 1936; Keegan to Johnson, undated; Smith to Gartrell, 1936; Thomas to Fechner, 1936; Thomas to Gartrell, 1936).

Political patronage, while officially discouraged, was common in the C.C.C. Many politicians used their influence to help constituents find jobs in the camps (Richardson, 1972; Salmond, 1967). This practice was common in the southwest Oklahoma camps. In April 1933, nearly a week before the *Lawton Constitution* announcement of a possible camp in the Wichita Mountains, a constituent contacted Senator Thomas to request a C.C.C. position in the Preserve, pressing him to “see the President first moment possible” (Chenowith to Thomas, 1933). Requests for positions in the C.C.C. continued until the end of the program. In April 1936, J.C. White, an Army Reserve officer from Stillwell, Oklahoma formerly serving in Company 870 wrote to Thomas requesting his reinstatement in the Corps. In the letter White thanked Thomas for earlier efforts and prompted action for his current request. He wrote

I appreciate your help in getting me my original detail two years ago and know that I will get this re-detail if you will help me. I know that you will not “pass the buck” by writing a formal letter to someone and let the matter drop if he says, “No.” But I do know that you will secure all that is possible even if you carry the matter to the president himself. (White to Thomas, 1936)

Thomas pursued the matter with Director Fechner and the Commanding General of the Eighth U.S. Army Corps (Thomas to Commanding General, 1936; Thomas to White, 1936; White to Thomas).

Thomas also helped constituents gain jobs as members of C.C.C. camp technical staffs. In a March 1936 letter, Mrs. Peachy Bottom of Hobart, Oklahoma, thanked the

Senator for helping another Hobart native gain employment with Camp SP-16 at Quartz Mountain State Park. Bottom wrote, "You will recall that I asked your support, and you very graciously gave it to me, in securing an appointment for Mr. O.P. Wilson as Camp Superintendent on this project" (Bottom to Thomas, 1936). In October 1940, a member of the Clinton C.C.C. camp technical staff wrote to thank Thomas for his help in securing his position and to pledge his future support.

I will take this opportunity to thank you, for helping me secure my position I now hold as Senior Foreman of Laborers, S.C.S. Camp Clinton.... If at any time I could be of any assistance to you, would be more than glad to do my part.

(Treadwell to Thomas, 1940)

Confirming his role in helping secure Treadwell's position Thomas replied, "It is a pleasure to note that, as a result of our efforts in your behalf, you have been given the desired promotion as Senior Foreman of Laborers at the S.C.S. Camp No. 11, [sic] Clinton" (Thomas to Treadwell, 1940).

At least one relative of an Oklahoma congressional leader held a supervisory position in a southwestern Oklahoma C.C.C. camp. Representative Johnson's brother Ira served as a junior foreman with Company 870 at an annual salary of \$1,680. A former enrollee who worked under Johnson's supervision on the Jed Johnson Lake tower road project remembered the congressman's brother fondly (Co. 870 Enrollee A, personal communication, September 12, 2003; National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 35, 1940a; 1941a).



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## CHAPTER VII

### Conclusions and Recommendations

President Roosevelt intended the C.C.C. to accomplish two broad goals. The first was to serve as a means of conserving what he perceived as wasted American land. The second was to conserve the wasted American youth. Though emotionally connected to the idea, the rapidity with which F.D.R. desired the realization of the C.C.C., in addition to the pressures of guiding the U.S. through the worst of the Great Depression, greatly limited his role in the formation of Corps policy. Subject to executive approval, he left these practical matters of implementation to Director Fechner and officials in the War, Labor, Agriculture, and Interior Departments. Though various theorists have claimed the government designed and or utilized the C.C.C. primarily as a measure of social control, the evidence suggests that this happened only to a limited degree in southwestern Oklahoma. To a much larger degree the individual governmental agencies with partial control of Corps activities, as well as politicians, tended to use the C.C.C. pragmatically in the service of their best interests.

F.D.R. himself used the C.C.C. in a pragmatic fashion early in its history. Shortly after his 1933 Inauguration, the President utilized the C.C.C. as a means of averting urban rebellion. His decision to allow veterans into the ranks of the C.C.C. prevented a potential uprising led by the second bonus march participants in Washington D.C. This act displayed the ability of the Corps to be used as both a pragmatic means of resolving a conflict and as a measure of social control.

The U.S. military, though initially opposed to their involvement in the Corps, greatly benefited from their involvement in the C.C.C. The rapid creation and



implementation of the Corps provided valuable experience for World War II mobilization. As the C.C.C. did not operate under the Articles of War, the military officers in charge of the individual camps lacked its coercive power. The situation forced these reserve officers to use reason, interpersonal skill, compassion, and force of personality in the leadership of the young C.C.C. men. As a result, the U.S. armed forces had thousands of reserve military officers with strong leadership skills available for duty at the onset of World War II.

The C.C.C. greatly enhanced the quality of men entering the military services during World War II. The Corps provided the armed forces with young men ready for military service. The former enrollees knew how to live in barracks with other men. They were accustomed to hard physical labor in the outdoors. They understood the rudiments of military discipline, order, and dress. Many skills learned at the job site under the supervision of the technical services transferred directly to the wartime military. The C.C.C. provided the armed services with thousands of experienced cooks, carpenters, welders, mechanics, truck drivers, bulldozer operators, surveyors, signal communicators, and various engineering troops.

The evidence suggests that the technical services were generally not interested in social control. These agencies of the Departments of Agriculture and Interior were primarily concerned with the promotion of work on their lands. Prior to the formation of the C.C.C., both the U.S.F.S. and the N.P.S. had developed long-range plans for many of their areas. Each held little hope of implementing them in the near future. The creation of the C.C.C. allowed the U.S.F.S., the N.P.S., and other agencies within the Departments of Agriculture and Interior to push work ahead of schedule by many years. Through the

C.C.C. the U.S.F.S conducted much improvement work in national, state, and private forests. The N.P.S. improved and created many areas and facilities on their own lands. In addition, they supervised the improvement and creation of many state park systems including Oklahoma's. With C.C.C. labor, the S.C.S. implemented a nation-wide system of soil conservation. Through Corps efforts the B.B.S. improved their national wildlife refuge system. These C.C.C. affiliated technical agencies used the C.C.C. as a means of furthering their own agendas, not as a means of social control.

Politicians also used the C.C.C. pragmatically. Political leaders utilized the C.C.C. as a means of maintaining popularity with their constituencies. From the conception of the Corps in 1933 until its abolishment in 1942, southwestern Oklahoma politicians worked tirelessly for the placement and continuation of camps in their districts. These politicians also used the C.C.C. as a means of providing jobs to constituents. These acts of political patronage not only involved the politicians helping young men gain enrollee positions but also Corps jobs in the technical services and military camp leadership. These opportunistic activities, made possible by the C.C.C., served as powerful reelection tools for area politicians in a time of economic depression. These politicians used the C.C.C. to their best advantage. In at least one case a southwestern Oklahoma politician's brother served as a C.C.C. technical service supervisor in his own congressional district.

F.D.R. conceptualized the C.C.C. as a means of saving the American land and youth. Though implemented quickly and executed by a conglomeration of agencies, the program succeeded on both counts. Under the supervision of the technical services from the Departments of Agriculture and Interior, the C.C.C. vastly improved the nation's

parks, forests, and agricultural areas. The Corps provided nearly three million financially desperate young men with jobs. Through their monthly allotments these young men contributed financially to the well being of their families. The C.C.C. provided useful training to the enrollees, facilitating their return to the workforce. The Corps provision of nutritious food, quality medical care, and outdoor work improved the health of the young men. Most enrollees agree that the C.C.C. was a positive experience.

The governmental agencies and politicians involved with the C.C.C. tended to use the Corps pragmatically in the pursuit of their own interests. The President utilized the C.C.C. as a means of averting rebellion. The technical agencies of the Departments of Agriculture and Interior used the C.C.C. to advance their programs of land improvement. Through the gaining and retention of camps and patronage, politicians used the C.C.C. to strengthen relationships with their constituencies. In an especially fortunate manner, the U.S. military effectively utilized the Corps as a means of advancing preparedness. The high quality officers and enlisted men that emerged from the ranks of the C.C.C. greatly enhanced the U.S. armed forces' ability to rapidly mobilize for World War II.

From these conclusions the researcher makes several recommendations. Further research into the C.C.C. as a means of social control should be undertaken. Case study research of western Oklahoma C.C.C. camps of different types would provide valuable information of the topic. This research should include the C.C.C. Indian Division camps, veteran camps, and "colored" camps. The C.C.C. established camps of each type in western Oklahoma. Case studies of the C.C.C. I.D. camps at Clinton, the veteran camp at Hobart, and the colored camp at Ft. Sill would provide interesting comparisons with the data compiled in this study of western Oklahoma white junior camps.

This research effort has convinced the author of the desirability of youth programs such as the C.C.C. The same benefits expounded upon by the former C.C.C. enrollees interviewed for this study are desirable for today's youth. A mandatory service period of six months to one year following the completion of high school in an agency modeled on the C.C.C. would provide numerous benefits. Many of the parks and recreation areas and facilities constructed by New Deal era work relief agencies such as the C.C.C. are in states of disrepair today. A new C.C.C. could be used to revitalize these dilapidated projects. New work in parks and conservation projects undertaken by a revitalized C.C.C. would provide American public land managers the means to protect the natural resource heritage of the nation.

Oklahoma State University  
Institutional Review Board

Protocol Expires: 9/1/2004

Date: Tuesday, September 02, 2003

IRB Application No ED0420

Proposal Title: THE CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS AS A MEANS OF SOCIAL CONTROL: A  
SOUTHWESTERN OKLAHOMA PERSPECTIVE AT THE LOCAL, STATE, AND  
FEDERAL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT

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Reviewed and  
Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

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Dear PI:

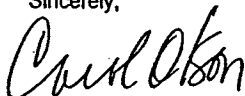
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Sincerely,



Carol Olson, Chair  
Institutional Review Board

VITA 2

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