

CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS
IN ARKANSAS

CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS
IN ARKANSAS

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of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

By

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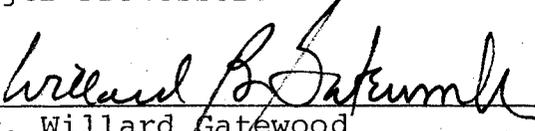
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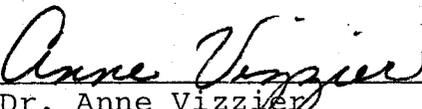
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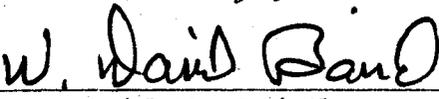
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PREFACE

The Civilian Conservation Corps was perhaps the most successful and popular of all the New Deal programs. It was successful because of a unique administration that utilized existing governmental resources to solve a complex socio-economic problem. It was popular because of its fundamental objectives and the permanent nature of its work projects.

In this study I shift the focus from the national to the state and local levels of the CCC. In so doing, I have tried to expose blurred administrative lines of authority and discern the secrets to the Corps' remarkable administrative success. Out of the study evolves an interesting picture of what can happen when a bureaucracy addresses itself to a major problem in an efficient manner.

Sources for the CCC at the state level were sparse. Serious gaps in this work were therefore prevented only through the unhesitating cooperation of Samuel Sizer, Director of Special Collections at the University of Arkansas Library at Fayetteville, in obtaining microfilm copies of camp inspection reports from the National Archives. Major General Bruce E. Kendall made invaluable contributions to the study by describing camp administration

and life from the perspective of a camp commander. Fred H. Lang, state associate forester in charge of CCC projects, cleared up some significant administrative grey areas. Russell L. Huddleston and C.A. Lyon presented the enrollee's view of life in the CCC. I am indebted to Dr. David W. Baird for providing me with the fundamental tools for historical research and writing. Finally, I am eternally grateful to Dr. Willard Gatewood for contributing his time, expertise, enthusiasm, and encouragement in the writing of this humble work.

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INTRODUCTION

The stock market collapse in 1929 ushered in a decade of economic depression that caught most of the nation by surprise. Businessmen floundered in a vast sluggish and unresponsive economy while workers lost their jobs, savings, and homes. The federal government responded to the woes of businessmen while private citizens were largely left to the resources of their respective states in seeking relief from economic disaster, during the initial years of the depression. Few states were as ill prepared for helping their citizens as Arkansas.

In 1930, Arkansas' per capita income was less than half the national average of \$705. Agriculture was a major industry in the state but no less than sixty-three per cent of the state's farmers were tenant farmers. An extensive highway building program, undertaken during the 1920's, left Arkansas with a debt of over seventy million dollars by the end of the decade. By 1933 the total bonded debt of the state was the fourth largest in the nation.¹

¹David E. Rison, "Arkansas During the Depression" (Ph.D. dissertation, UCLA, 1974), pp. 5, 41; Louis D. Norris, "Years of Crisis: The New Deal Administration of Junius Marion Futrell" (M.A. thesis, Arkansas State University, 1971), pp. 11-12.

At the very time when the state government was least able to give relief, its citizens were in dire need of it. It seemed as if nature itself plotted against Arkansas in the first years of the depression. Beginning with the Mississippi Valley flood in 1927, Arkansas confronted a succession of droughts, tornadoes, and harsh winters.² When the weather cooperated, the state found itself plagued with unemployment problems. By 1930, for instance, 35,000 people were out of work. Unemployment continued to increase until only 62.7 per cent of those working in 1929 were still working in 1932.³ Even law enforcement became a problem when, in 1932, insurance companies threatened to withdraw their coverage of rural banks after a rash of thirty-four bank holdups within a fifteen-month period.⁴

The first significant effort to deal with the depression came on November 26, 1930 when Governor Harvey Parnell established the State Committee on Unemployment. The State Committee petitioned the federal government for public works funds, urged businessmen not to lower salary rates, and encouraged home owners to hire the unemployed

²Arkansas, Emergency Relief Administration, "Report of C.W.A. Activities in Arkansas," by Frank R. Allen (Little Rock, 1934), p. c. (Typewritten.)

³Floyd Sharp, Traveling Recovery Road (Little Rock, 1936), p. 17.

⁴Robert E. Wait to Thomas C. McRae Jr., 28 July 1932, Thomas C. McRae, Jr. Papers, Box 4, Folder 1, Special Collections, University of Arkansas Library, Fayetteville.

for repair or yard work. Cooperating with the Federation of Women's Clubs, the State Committee sponsored a fund-raising tour by Will Rogers through the state. Lasting from the ninth through the twelfth of February, 1931, the tour produced \$39,191.00 for county relief funds. Not surprisingly, all efforts by state officials to mollify the effects of the depression proved entirely inadequate. In August, 1932 Governor Parnell applied for federal loans, admitting in his applications that the state could no longer handle relief problems.⁵

The transition from state to federal relief work was a gradual and inevitable development. From July, 1932 through November, 1936 three successive state relief commissions and two federal relief agencies, the Civil Works Administration and the Works Progress Administration, dispersed a total of \$81,335,768.94 in federal relief funds throughout the state.⁶ Ultimately, the financial responsibility for all public relief work was delegated to the Works Progress Administration and other federal agencies. State agencies played a cooperative role by supplying administrative manpower and sponsoring work projects.⁷

Perhaps the best single example of federal-state collaboration during the depression was found in the

⁵Sharp, Traveling Recovery Road, pp. 17-18.

⁶Ibid., p. 17.

⁷Arthur W. MacMahon, John D. Millett, and Gladys Ogden, The Administration of Federal Work Relief (Chicago, 1941), pp. 303-05.

Civilian Conservation Corps. Officially known as the Emergency Conservation Work program, the CCC received Congressional approval on March 31, 1933.⁸ The objective of the Corps was to employ single young men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five on conservation projects throughout the country. Living in 200-man camps, under the authority of the Army, the boys were employed on projects such as reforestation, soil conservation, road construction, and fire suppression. They were paid thirty dollars a month, twenty-five of which was sent to their families.

There were five fundamental components to the administration of the Civilian Conservation Corps. The Office of the Director, located in Washington D. C., had the primary task of coordinating the overall program. The Department of War was charged with the processing, transporting, clothing, housing, and feeding of enrollees. The Departments of Agriculture and Interior provided the technical supervision and planning of work projects. Within this structure numerous agencies carried out the details of administration.⁹

⁸The name, Civilian Conservation Corps, was first used by President Roosevelt in 1933 but did not become official until June 28, 1937. John A. Salmond, The CCC: A New Deal Case Study (Durham, 1969), p. 26.

⁹Charles P. Harper, The Administration of the CCC (Clarksburg, W. Va., 1939), pp. 21-22; U.S. Emergency Conservation Work, Office of the Director, Report of the Director to the President for the Period April 5, 1933 to September 30, 1933, p. 9. (Hereinafter cited as Director's Reports.)

Though the Civilian Conservation Corps seemed complex enough to drive any sane bureaucrat to his mother-in-law, the program actually proved to be a relatively smooth operation. Several factors contributed to this success, including the excellent service of the Army, the built-in administrative flexibility of the organization, and the general enthusiasm of most of those individuals involved with the Corps at the federal, state, and local levels of government.

A study of the Civilian Conservation Corps demonstrates just how government officials utilized existing elements within society to deal with immediate problems. Such a study also demonstrates the concrete benefits gained from a program doing constructive work for constructive reasons. It is a study of mass mobilization not for war but for peace. Finally, by looking at the Civilian Conservation Corps in Arkansas, one gets a glimpse of what can happen when the federal government works with a state government for the preservation and benefit of society.

CHAPTER ONE

ADMINISTRATIVE COOPERATION

A dream of young men working to preserve the nation's natural resources was not only romantic but possible during the trying times of the Great Depression. Such a dream was romantic in that it brought back visions of a lost frontier and a national para-military force in which young men learned to build rather than destroy. The dream was possible because people were desperate enough to try anything to mitigate the worst effects of the depression. The Civilian Conservation Corps was the manifestation of that romantic dream. But no matter how great the desire or need, only the cooperation of federal and state agencies could make that dream a pleasant reality rather than an embarrassing farce.

The Office of the Director represented the apex of the Corps' administrative pyramid. The Director, Robert Fechner, executed presidential policy decisions on such matters as the welfare, discipline, and pay of enrollees. An Advisory Council, composed of representatives from cooperating executive departments, aided the Director in making policy decisions concerning work projects and other

administrative details. The Advisory Council had no authority over the Director.¹

Although the Director was primarily concerned with policy and administrative matters at the national level, he did become involved at the state level in at least two key areas. As the final authority on camp site selection, the Director determined which counties received CCC camps. In the site-selection process, the Director worked closely with the Technical Services (the Departments of Agriculture and Interior). Usually, state authorities submitted project plans to either the Department of the Interior or the Department of Agriculture. If the plans were approved by government engineers, a departmental representative assisted the Director in selecting the county and camp site. Transportation, sanitation, and water facilities on the proposed site were inspected by local representatives of the Army and the Technical Services. Final approval of the camp site hinged on the recommendation of the camp inspectors.² Besides camp site selection, the Director's special investigators regularly inspected all camps and investigated complaints

¹Salmond, The CCC: A New Deal Case Study, pp. 71, 72-73.

²Charles W. Johnson, "The Civilian Conservation Corps: The Role of the Army," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1969; Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 69-12143, n.d.), p. 94.

submitted to the Director's Office by enrollees, state citizens, and state government officials.³

While the Director conducted the orchestra, the Army played the role of agent, attending to the details of transportation, finance, record keeping, lodging, and discipline of Corps members.⁴ In order to carry out this immense task, the Army established a highly centralized administrative framework. All CCC matters were handled by the G-3 and G-4 sections of the General Staff at the highest level.⁵ Below the General Staff, the nation was divided into nine Corps Areas commanded by major or brigadier generals. An educational adviser, selected by the U.S. Office of Education, and liaison officers, assigned by the Technical Services, assisted the corps area commanders in the administration of camps within their areas. The educational adviser was under the authority of the corps area commander. Liaison officers answered to the Director. Each Corps Area was divided into districts, encompassing one or more states. The districts were in turn divided into subdistricts.⁶

³Ibid., pp. 35-38.

⁴Harper, The Administration of the Civilian Conservation Corps, p. 38.

⁵By 1940 all CCC affairs were centered in the Adjutant General's Office. Johnson, "The Role of the Army," p. 23.

⁶Ibid., pp. 19-20; Harper, The Administration of the CCC, pp. 39-41.

Arkansas was one district within the Seventh Corps Area. Headquarters for the Seventh Corps were in Omaha, Nebraska, while the Arkansas District Headquarters were established in Little Rock at East 25th Street and Rock Island Railroad. Arkansas District was split into sub-districts covering the northwestern, northeastern, western, and southern segments of the state.

Established April 4, 1933, Arkansas District Headquarters represented the hub of CCC camp administration in the state.⁷ The District had several commanders, during the first few years of the Corps, until the post was assumed by Major G.C. Graham on April 1, 1936. Major Graham retained the command until the early 1940s. Assisting the district commander were an adjutant officer, an assistant adjutant, and several inspection officers. Officers specializing in finance, supplies, transportation, procurement, salvage and the branches of medicine and religion handled administrative details. A district educational adviser supervised educational programs in the camps.⁸

Responsible for the administration of all CCC camps in the district, Arkansas District Headquarters reflected

⁷Works Progress Administration, Inventory of Federal Archives in the States, Series IV, the Department of War, no. 4, Arkansas (New Orleans: The Survey of Federal Archives, 1938), p. 11; Olive H. Nelson, "Civilian Conservation," Arkansas Gazette Magazine, 12 January 1936, p. 2.

⁸U.S. Department of War, Official Annual, Arkansas District, Seventh Corps Area, Civilian Conservation Corps (n.p., 1937), p. 9. (Hereinafter cited as Official Annual.)

the high degree of administrative centralization practiced by the Army. All communication to and from camp commanders was channeled through Little Rock. The district finance officer issued all paychecks to members of the CCC. Nonperishable supplies were distributed from a central warehouse by some 257 trucks to camps in all parts of the state.⁹ Every piece of equipment damaged or destroyed on the projects went to the Salvage Division in Little Rock to be repaired or recorded. Arkansas was unique in that it was the only CCC district repairing all Corps vehicles in its own motor pool, instead of relying on army mechanics.¹⁰ Contracts with construction companies, farmers, and businesses were let only in Little Rock.¹¹ Finally, all Arkansas CCC companies were formed at Camp Pike, in Little Rock, where enrollees were processed and conditioned for camp life.

Subdistrict offices were maintained at Russellville, Arkadelphia, El Dorado, and Little Rock. Officers at the subdistrict level aided the district headquarters in supply distribution and conducted camp inspections. Army chaplains

⁹Olive H. Nelson, "Civilian Conservation," Arkansas Gazette Magazine, 19 January 1936, p. 3.

¹⁰Beginning December 1, 1935, all supplies were shipped by trains to railheads near CCC camps, greatly reducing the chance for accidents. Ibid., p. 14.

¹¹Ibid., p. 3.

in the subdistrict offices recruited local pastors to conduct services in the camps.¹²

The centralized administrative system may have been generally efficient but it possessed at least one major flaw. Letting contracts to companies for statewide jobs encouraged some of the more unsavory practices of private enterprise. One bread company, for example, used CCC camps as dumping bins for its day-old bread. The company was discovered only after First Lieutenant Bruce M. Kendall, assistant adjutant to the district commander, began an investigation after receiving several complaints about stale bread. Breaking the company's dating code, Kendall found that the company was simply leaving fresh bread at stores while depositing all the old bread, collected during the day, at the more remote camps.¹³ Lieutenant Kendall's investigation only substantiated long-standing complaints about the contract system by special investigators from the Director's Office.¹⁴

The job of supplying the Army with enrollees fell to the Department of Labor. Within the department, enrollee selection was delegated to the U.S. Employment Service.

¹²Interview with Major General Bruce E. Kendall, Fayetteville, Arkansas, 25 January 1977.

¹³Kendall interview, 25 January 1977.

¹⁴J.S. Billups to Major G.C. Graham, 30 April 1936, U.S. Civilian Conservation Corps, Selected Arkansas-related Records, 1933-1942, roll 1. (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Service, 1976.) (Hereinafter cited as Camp inspection reports.)

The Employment Service assigned the job of making selections at the state level to state relief agencies, limiting itself to passing down policy guidelines and enrollment quotas.¹⁵

In Arkansas, the State Emergency Relief Administration was responsible for making all enrollee selections for the Civilian Conservation Corps. Working through county unemployment relief committees, W.A. Rooksbery, the state CCC selection officer, selected unmarried young men, called Juniors, from among families registered on county relief rolls. The Emergency Relief Administration also selected local experienced men, dubbed LEMS. The State Forestry Commission and the National Forest Service recommended all LEMS and there were no age or marriage restrictions on the group. The selection of a third group, veterans, depended on the cooperation of the Veterans' Administration. The Labor Department determined state selection quotas by determining the proportion of the state's population to the population of the country.¹⁶ Ultimately, the job of selecting enrollees was formally assumed by the State Department of Public Welfare in February, 1936.¹⁷

¹⁵Salmond, The CCC, p. 27; Harper, The Administration of the CCC, p. 32.

¹⁶Sharp, Traveling Recovery Road, p. 117; Salmond, The CCC, p. 27.

¹⁷Sharp, Traveling Recovery Road, p. 118.

In the selection of enrollees the state assumed its heaviest work load in the collaborative administration of the Civilian Conservation Corps. Though there were only four enrollment periods each year in the months of April, July, October, and January, the job was a full-time endeavor. Young men, wanting to enter the Corps, began the selection process by filing applications at county welfare offices. The application provided selection agents with basic data about the applicant's health, education, work experience, and family background. After filing the application, the boy was interviewed by a selection agent trying to determine whether or not he would last a full six-month enrollment period. The interview was generally followed by a brief investigation of the boy's family, determining economic need, and school record.¹⁸ If all went well, the boy waited until he was called by the agent to report for a physical examination.¹⁹ After being selected, he designated a recipient for the mandatory twenty-five dollar deduction from his monthly check. The selection agent was responsible for insuring that the check went to a recipient actually in need of it.²⁰

The Arkansas State Department of Public Welfare gained an excellent reputation for efficiency during its

¹⁸Louise McCue, "Choosing Boys for the CCC," Arkansas Gazette Magazine, 12 January 1941, p. 7.

¹⁹Malvern Meteor Journal, 4 May 1933, p. 1.

²⁰McCue, "Choosing Boys for the CCC," p. 7.

participation in the CCC program. Dedicated welfare workers were a major factor contributing to that record. One county welfare worker spent thirty-six hours interviewing applicants and their families when he suspected openings in out-of-state camps. He drove from house to house in an attempt to ascertain whether the boys would be willing and ready to go when the call came. Exhausted, the selection agent had to allow one of the boys to drive his car while he finished his rounds.²¹ The director of the Mena Welfare Office, Mrs. Olive Nall, rounded up several enrollees for Company 747 when she received word that the company had room for more boys if they could be brought to camp before midnight. Traveling over a hundred miles, she managed to have the boys ready at Mena with all the paper work finished by noon. When one of the boys proved unacceptable, she resumed her search and still managed to have the boys at camp by dark.²²

Not satisfied with the mere selection of enrollees, the Welfare Department attempted to aid them after they left the camps. In 1937, for instance, the maximum age limit for Juniors was lowered to twenty-three. The change resulted in the discharge of hundreds of enrollees. Reacting to the situation quickly, the Welfare Department cooperated with the National Reemployment Service and

²¹McCue, "Choosing Boys for the CCC," p. 10.

²²Mena Weekly Star, 27 October 1938, p. 3.

CCC District Headquarters in sponsoring an employment drive throughout the state.²³ More significantly, a placement program grew out of the effort. Developed under the guidance of Ed Bethune, State Selecting Agent, the program attempted to open a complicated job market to boys totally unfamiliar with the terrain. The names of six boys from each camp in the state were placed on a list with the National Reemployment Service. Each month the National Reemployment Service published bulletins, listing the personal characteristics and skills of individual enrollees for circulation among potential employers. Two copies of the bulletins were circulated, one recommending enrollees for construction work and the other listing enrollees trained for clerical jobs. At the same time, applications were filed at the Little Rock District Office of the U.S. Employment Service. Arrangements were also made so that employers could actually request specific types of workers from the camps or the National Reemployment Service.²⁴

As the Civilian Conservation Corps expanded, it became increasingly obvious that the selection of enrollees was extremely important to the success of the program.

²³Magnolia Banner News, 12 August 1937, p. 5.

²⁴Gussie Haynie, "Arkansas Public Welfare Review," vol. 1, no. 2, Little Rock, 1937, p. 5 (Mimeographed); A.C. London et al., "Four Arkansas Boys and the Civilian Conservation Corps," Little Rock, 1937 (?), p. 9.

Since any boy could leave the camp at any time, suffering nothing more than the loss of his paycheck, desertion was a potentially significant problem. Good selection agents made an effort to know what camp life was like, enabling them to present a realistic picture of the Civilian Conservation Corps to prospective enrollees. Other agents sought to recruit boys for the Corps by doing just the opposite, painting a picture of all play and no work.²⁵

The State Department of Public Welfare acquired its greatest success at the potentially weak link of selection agent-enrollee communication. Orientation sessions were sponsored by the department, in which potential enrollees were informed of their duties and privileges in the CCC. Invited to the sessions with their parents, the enrollees were entertained in schools, courtrooms, or hotels. The program often included a free meal and a movie, along with lectures on conservation work. Generally a camp commander, educational adviser, and outstanding enrollee showed up at the sessions and answered questions.²⁶ The program proved so successful that eventually those boys attending the orientation sessions were given preference over those who did not.²⁷

²⁵Frank E. Hill and Kenneth Holland, Youth in the CCC (Washington, D.C., 1942), pp. 52-56.

²⁶Russellville Weekly Tribune, 20 April 1939, p. 4; McCue, "Choosing Boys for the CCC," pp. 7-8.

²⁷Marshall Mountain Wave, 27 September 1940, p. 1.

The administrative duties of the Army, the Department of Labor, and the State Department of Public Welfare were relatively straightforward and visible. Similar administrative relationships between state and federal agencies on the technical side of the CCC were not so obvious.

State and federal officials performed roughly parallel functions on CCC forestry projects. The U.S. Forestry Service, in the Department of Agriculture, provided technical personnel for those projects located in national forest areas. Members of the State Forestry Commission supervised CCC forestry projects on state and private land. Plans for state projects, citing data relating to the location of lookout towers, telephone lines, and fire suppression roads, required the approval of the U.S. Forestry Service. Forest Service inspectors regularly visited all forestry projects in the Arkansas District and all project personnel were paid by the Army from CCC funds.²⁸

In 1936, the United States maintained 157 national forests in the country, divided into ten regions. The Ozark and Ouachita national forests of Arkansas were in Region Eight whose headquarters were in Atlanta, Georgia. The Ozark national forest, situated north of the Arkansas

²⁸Dorothy D. Bromley, "The Forest Army That Lives by Work," New York Times, 23 July 1933, sec. 8, p. 2; Fred H. Lang to author, 4 January 1977.

river and divided into four districts, maintained its headquarters at Russellville. Divided into six ranger districts, the Ouachita national forest was administered from a central office in Hot Springs.²⁹

Each national forest was under the authority of a supervisor. Beneath the supervisors were district rangers in charge of areas varying between 150,000 to 300,000 acres in size. An assistant ranger, a clerk, project superintendents for CCC camps, and maintenance crews assisted each district ranger in the administration of his duties. Along with general maintenance and protection duties, the district ranger also enforced the law within his district.³⁰

Accountable for the development and maintenance of fire suppression systems on state and forest lands, the Arkansas State Forestry Commission contributed important auxiliaries to the forest protection forces of the state. Although the Forestry Commission was created in 1931, the legislature failed to appropriate money and the Forestry Commission remained a paper dream. Refused funds for a second time in 1932, the Forestry Commission was saved from a file cabinet exile by the commencement of the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1933. One of the conditions for

²⁹Mena Weekly Star, 4 June 1936, p. 2.

³⁰James L. Averell to Harlan Hobbs, 15 July 1936, Ouachita and Ozark National Forests Folder, WPA Research Files, Arkansas History Commission, Little Rock.

receiving the "reforestation camps" was the establishment of a state forestry agency capable of assuming responsibility for CCC forestry work on private lands. Acting quickly, Governor J.M. Futrell sponsored a fund drive throughout the state that eventually garnered just under \$8,000 in contributions from individuals and communities. In May, 1933 Arkansas became the forty-first state in the nation to institute a forestry program.³¹

The Forestry Commission was composed of five members: the Dean of the College of Agriculture of the University of Arkansas, the Commissioner of Mines, Manufactures and Agriculture, and three members appointed by the Governor for six-year terms. The State Forester, hired by the Forestry Commission, was responsible for developing a state forestry program in cooperation with representatives of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The State Forester served a second function as secretary to the Commission.³²

Under the able direction of the State Forester, Charles A. Gillett, the State Forestry Commission built a forestry program from scratch. The state was divided into

³¹Arkansas State Forestry Commission. "Proceedings of the First Annual Meeting of Cooperatives" (Little Rock, June 25, 1936), p. 1 (Typewritten); Fred H. Lang, "Two Decades of Arkansas Forestry," Arkansas Historical Quarterly, vol. xxiv (Autumn, 1965): 308-219.

³²Arkansas, "An Act to Create a Commission to be Known as the State Forestry Commission," Acts of Arkansas (1931), sec. 1-2.

the Southern Pine, Ozark, and Delta regions and administered by regional foresters. The regions were divided into ranger districts of seventy-five to one hundred thousand acres.³³ Technical personnel working on CCC projects were under the direct supervision of the State Forester, rather than the district ranger as arranged in the national forest areas.³⁴

Much of the land protected by the Forestry Commission was privately owned. Consequently, arrangements were made early in the program whereby private forest land owners could register their land with the Forestry Commission, paying an annual rate of two cents per acre for fire protection. The federal government matched the fee, cutting normal protection costs in half and giving the Forestry Commission additional funds for establishing fire suppression systems within the state.³⁵ All work in the forests accomplished by CCC labor had to be of a public nature. The Forestry Commission and the land owner were legally bound to maintain the fire suppression systems of roads, towers, and telephone lines. Failure to fulfill the agreement would result in the removal of fire towers

³³Lang, "Two Decades of Arkansas Forestry," pp. 213, 219.

³⁴Arkansas, State Forestry Commission, Annual Report of the Arkansas State Forestry Commission to the Governor, for the Fiscal Year Ended 30 June 1932 (Chart), p. 17. (Hereinafter cited as Annual State Forestry Report.)

³⁵Fred M. Johnson, "Guarding Arkansas Forests Against Fires," The Arkansas Gazette Magazine, 6 August 1933, p. 3.

and other facilities contributed by the federal government. All project costs, except the salary of the State Forester, were absorbed by the Civilian Conservation Corps.³⁶

Unlike the State Department of Public Welfare and the State Forestry Commission, the State Park Commission did not contribute personnel to the Emergency Conservation Work program. In fact, for all practical purposes, Arkansas did not have a state park system until the advent of the Civilian Conservation Corps. Petit Jean, Mt. Nebo, and the Arkansas Post were the only parks in the state before the CCC and none of them were properly developed for public use.³⁷ The sole national park in Arkansas was at Hot Springs, situated in Region Seven of the national park system. The regional offices were in Oklahoma City.³⁸

Composed of five members, appointed by the Governor for five-year terms, the State Parks Commission was an excellent example of a state "sponsor" used on many federal

³⁶First Annual State Forestry Report, p. 15; Robert Fechner to Governor J.M. Futrell, Telegram (Copy), 5 May 1933, Futrell Papers, Folder 177, Arkansas History Commission, Little Rock.

³⁷Radio Address (Typewritten), 15 June 1935, Brough Papers, Box 16, Folder 36, Special Collections, University of Arkansas Library, Fayetteville; S.G. Davies to Nell R. Morton, 13 May 1942, WPA Research Files, State Parks Folder, Arkansas History Commission, Little Rock.

³⁸p. Patraw to Nell Morton, 17 April 1942, WPA Research Files, Hot Springs National Park Folder, Arkansas History Commission, Little Rock; Company 3777, Fair Park Breeze, 20 January 1936, p. 1, CCC Camp Papers, University of Arkansas Library, Fayetteville.

relief projects during the New Deal period.³⁹ As a sponsor, a state agency was responsible for planning a project that would be funded and constructed by the federal government. Upon completion, the government moved out and the state assumed administrative control.⁴⁰ Accordingly, the State Parks Commission purchased park land and submitted project plans to the State Parks Division of the National Park Service, in the Department of the Interior. The National Park Service hired all technical personnel while the Civilian Conservation Corps handled the labor and cost of the project. Once the project was completed, the park was opened to the public under the direction of the State Parks Director, hired by the State Parks Commission.

An excellent example of how the sponsorship system worked in connection with the CCC, may be seen in a 1936 proposal to expand the lake at Crowley's Ridge State Park in Northeast Arkansas. To begin the project, the State Parks Commission acquired extra land and drew up plans for a new dam. These plans included technical details such as the average rainfall in the area, total area of drainage into the park's lake, and average evaporation. The plans

³⁹Arkansas, State Planning Board, "Arkansas Park, Parkway and Recreational-Area Plan," Little Rock, 1939, pp. 7-8 (Typewritten), Special Collections, University of Arkansas Library, Fayetteville.

⁴⁰Arthur W. MacMahon, et al., The Administration of Federal Work Relief (Chicago, 1941), p. 303.

were submitted to the National Parks Service through its State Parks Division offices in Little Rock. From Little Rock, the plans were sent to Washington, D.C., where they were reviewed by the department of engineering. Questioning the water supply, in this case, an engineer and geologist were despatched by the National Park Service to investigate the project site. Crews from a nearby CCC camp did not go to work on the project until the special investigators gave their final approval.⁴¹

Efforts were made at both the state and federal levels to insure the uniform development of state park systems. In 1935 the Arkansas Park Service was created by temporary federal personnel, working on state parks, for the purpose of coordinating plans for recreational facilities and administrative techniques. Members paid monthly dues of twenty-five cents and met at various CCC camps and park areas to exchange information that would aid in the development of the state park system. The meetings were understandably popular and drew the attendance of state politicians as well as private citizens.⁴² President Roosevelt stimulated park uniformity on the national level, promoting the passage of a bill that provided funds for a

⁴¹D.N. Graves to J.M. Futrell, 21 July 1936, Futrell Papers, Folder 63, Arkansas History Commission, Little Rock.

⁴²News Release, 24 January 1937, Camp Inspection Reports, General Information File, U of A Library, Fayetteville.

national study of park recreational facilities. This bill, the Park, Parkway and Recreation Study Act, promoted cooperation between state and federal authorities and enlisted public support for the state park movement.⁴³

Soil Conservation was another child of the New Deal decade nurtured to maturity by the CCC. Soil conservation work began in Arkansas in May, 1934 with the creation of the East Cadron Creek project, centered around Conway. By 1936 there were six soil conservation projects underway, employing the services of fifteen CCC camps.⁴⁴

The early projects were called soil conservation associations. In an association, several farmers entered into an agreement with the Soil Erosion Service,⁴⁵ allowing government officials the use of their land for soil conservation demonstration projects in return for free CCC labor. Each farmer was required to supply either horse or motor power while the government furnished fresnals and

⁴³John Ise, Our National Park Policy (Baltimore, 1961), pp. 366-67.

⁴⁴Edgar A. Hodson, "Report on the Soil Conservation Service in Arkansas," Little Rock, 1936. (Typewritten.) WPA Research Files, Soil Conservation Folder, Arkansas History Commission, Little Rock.

⁴⁵The Soil Erosion Service was first established by the President in the Department of the Interior in 1933. Duplication of work projects between the Departments of Agriculture and Interior caused the entire program to be moved to the Department of Agriculture in 1935 and named the Soil Conservation Service. Charles M. Hardin, "The Politics of Conservation: An Illustration," The Journal of Politics, Vol. XIII (August, 1951), 461-65.

plows. The farmer was not required to pay a single penny for any conservation work done on his farm.⁴⁶

Ultimately, the soil conservation associations proved too expensive and impractical because of the relatively small number of farmers brought into the program. Seeking a more efficient method, the Soil Conservation Service developed a "standard act" in May, 1936, which outlined soil conservation districts designed to bring state governments into soil conservation projects.⁴⁷

Adopting the district plan, the Arkansas State Assembly passed a modified form of the standard act in March, 1937. A State Soil Conservation Committee was formed, consisting of the Assistant Director of the State Agricultural Extension Service, the Assistant Director of the State Agriculture Experiment Stations, the State Director of Vocational Education, and Secretary of the State Forestry Commission.⁴⁸ According to the act, any twenty-five farmers could form a soil conservation district by filing a petition with the State Soil Conservation Committee. The district would be governed by a committee of five supervisors, three elected by members of the district and two appointed by the State Soil Conservation Committee.⁴⁹

⁴⁶Malvern Meteor Journal, 31 October 1935, Floyd Sharp Scrapbook, Arkansas History Commission, Little Rock.

⁴⁷R. Burnell Held and Marion Clawson, Soil Conservation in Perspective (Baltimore, 1965), pp. 46-48.

⁴⁸Arkansas, "Soil Conservation Districts Law," Acts of Arkansas (1937), sec. 4.

⁴⁹Ibid., sec. 5.

All CCC work on soil conservation projects in the Arkansas District was carried out under the authority and supervision of the U.S. Soil Conservation Service. Arkansas was in Region Four, which reported to regional headquarters in Fort Worth, Texas. The regional conservator was directly responsible to the Chief of the Soil Conservation Service in Washington, D.C. Under the regional conservator was a state coordinator, charged with the administration of soil conservation projects within the state. Beneath the state coordinator were four area conservationists liable for the administration of demonstration projects and CCC work. Each area conservationist maintained a staff employing project superintendents, clerks, and technical assistants.⁵⁰

Other conservation projects in the Arkansas District, claiming the services of the Civilian Conservation Corps, included fish hatcheries and wildlife preserves. Technical supervisors for CCC camps, located on wildlife preserves, were supplied by the Bureau of Biological Survey in the Department of the Interior. The State Game and Fish Commission cooperated with the Bureau on state projects.⁵¹ One of the best examples of federal and state cooperation

⁵⁰Glenn E. Riddell, "Report on the Soil Conservation Service in Arkansas," Little Rock, 19 October 1938 (Typewritten), WPA Research Files, Soil Conservation Folder, Arkansas History Commission, Little Rock.

⁵¹State Planning Board, "Arkansas Park, Parkway and Recreational-Area Plan," p. 7.

was in the informal relationship between the State Game and Fish Commission and the Technical Services. For instance, both state and federal forestry services cooperated with the State Game and Fish Commission during deer season, allowing several hundred CCC boys to assist game wardens as deputies in the enforcement of hunting laws.⁵²

The 200-man camp became a symbol of the Civilian Conservation Corps. Behind that camp, though, stood a vast administrative machinery, functioning at both the federal and state levels. The state government provided project plans and administrative personnel. The federal government supplied the money, labor force, and technical guidelines. This cooperation between federal and state agencies made the utilization of existing societal elements in the solution to a complex problem possible. In the last analysis, then, the 200-man camp was not only a symbol of the Civilian Conservation Corps, but also the symbol of a remarkable bureaucracy that worked.

⁵²Arkansas Democrat, 29 November 1935; Floyd Sharp Scrapbook, Arkansas History Commission, Little Rock.

CHAPTER TWO

CCC PROJECTS IN ARKANSAS

The Civilian Conservation Corps was in the vanguard of those federal agencies coming to the relief of Arkansas during the depression. The CCC aided the state on the tactical level by supplying money and jobs, bringing immediate relief to thousands of citizens and pumping new life into the state's anemic economy. At the same time, the CCC provided Arkansas with a long-range or strategical answer to its economic dilemmas by concentrating on the preservation and development of natural resources. It was on the strategical level that the success of the CCC was measured in physical rather than abstract terms. In 1933, for example, the CCC found Arkansas plagued with soil erosion problems and threatened with the potential loss of poorly protected forest areas to drought and fire. When the CCC left in 1942, Arkansas retained an impressive forest protection system, several beautiful state parks, and a soil conservation program.

Forest conservation work was particularly valuable to Arkansas because it virtually halted the gradual destruction of the state's long-standing forest empire.

During the nineteenth century, the state included around

thirty-two million acres of prime timberlands. The northern half of the state was an immense hardwood forest, interspersed with patches of shortleaf pine. The southern part of Arkansas was marked by rolling hills covered with nearly nine million acres of pine trees.¹ Unfortunately, these abundant forest lands were reduced to twenty-two million acres by the 1930s and nearly three million acres of farmland was stripped of topsoil by soil erosion.²

The Department of Agriculture received approximately seventy-five per cent of all CCC camps, over half of which were put to work on national, state, and private forest lands.³ Two national forests provided the CCC with projects in Arkansas. The Ouachita National Forest was originally established by Presidential Proclamation in 1907. By 1939 it embraced 1,528,132 acres, including 291,000 acres in Eastern Oklahoma. Located in the southwestern part of the state, the Ouachita forest was the oldest and largest of the southern forests in the National Forest System. It was also one of the more lucrative of the southern forests. In 1935 the Ouachita forest grossed over \$90,000 in receipts from timber sales. Out of that profit twenty-five per cent

¹Fred H. Lang, "Two Decades of State Forestry in Arkansas," Arkansas Historical Quarterly, Vol. XIV (Autumn, 1965), p. 209.

²George W. Donaghey, Progress Report of the State Planning Board (Little Rock, 1936), pp. 38, 44.

³John A. Salmond, The CCC: A New Deal Case Study (Durham, 1967), p. 121.

went to county road and school funds and another ten per cent was put back into the forest for maintenance purposes.⁴ The Ozark National Forest, north of the Ouachita forest, was created by Presidential Proclamation in 1908. Smaller than the Ouachita forest, it covered only 787,147 acres. The primary function of the Ozark forest was the protection of watershed areas for the Arkansas and White rivers. A wide variety of timber species gave the Ozark forest a significant mark of distinction.⁵

The Civilian Conservation Corps engaged in both timberstand improvement and fire suppression work in the national forests. Working on timberstand improvement projects, CCC crews treated forest areas against disease, thinned out timberstands by removing dead and infected wood, and planted millions of seedlings. In fire suppression work, the boys built a system of truck trails, telephone lines, and observation towers.⁶

At the height of the CCC program up to sixteen camps were assigned to the Ouachita National Forest alone. In

⁴Arkansas, State Planning Board, "Arkansas Park, Parkway and Recreational-Area Plan," Little Rock, 1939, pp. 14-15 (Typewritten. Hereinafter cited as "Arkansas Recreational-Area Plan"), Special Collections, University of Arkansas Library, Fayetteville; Mena Weekly Star, 4 June 1936, p. 2.

⁵"Arkansas Recreational-Area Plan," p. 14; H.R. Koen to Rogers, 7 April 1936, WPA Research Files, Ouachita and Ozark National Forests Folder, Arkansas History Commission, Little Rock.

⁶Arkansas, State Forestry Commission, Second Annual Report of the Arkansas State Forestry Commission to the Governor, for the Fiscal Year Ended 30 June 1935, p. 26.

the forest, the boys built foot and truck trails, eleven picnic areas, eleven camp grounds, and four children's play grounds. Other projects included baseball fields, swimming and fishing lakes, picnic shelters, and a network of twenty-five observation towers connected by miles of telephone lines.⁷ Projects in the Ozark National Forest were of a similar nature involving work on three lakes, eleven picnic grounds, nine camp grounds, ten shelters, and roads for the use of both the public and fire suppression crews. The forest's fire protection system was boosted by the addition of twenty-five observation towers.⁸

Out of Arkansas' twenty-two million acres of forest land, private land owners claimed a total of 18.5 million acres.⁹ Work on these lands, carried out under the supervision of the State Forestry Commission, centered solely on building fire protection systems. The fire protection system built by the CCC resembled that used with notable success by private sawmill companies in Southern Arkansas. Under the system, men in strategically placed observation towers kept close watch over sections of the forest. When smoke was sighted, the towerman determined the approximate location of the fire, using a geometric chart called an

⁷"Arkansas Recreational-Area Plan," pp. 14-15; Mena Weekly Star, 4 June 1936, p. 2.

⁸"Arkansas Recreational-Area Plan," p. 14.

⁹Donaghey, Progress Report of the State Planning Board, p. 41.

allendale. The towerman then called a fireman living near the site of the fire, who located the incipient blaze and put it out. Each fireman possessed a broad flap, rake, and five-gallon water can. The flap was used for beating out small patches of fire. Using the rake, the fireman cleared flammable objects away from the fire zone. The water can enabled him to inundate spots of fire as far as fifty to sixty feet away.¹⁰

As suggested by the system described above, the primary purpose of fire protection systems was the reduction of reaction time to a minimum. Accordingly the Civilian Conservation Corps made an additional contribution to the state's fire protection system by merely supplying an extra reserve of manpower. In view of the fact that many farmers set fire to forests believing it would bring rain, this ready reservoir of manpower was crucial in a time of drought.¹¹ CCC personnel devoted thousands of manhours to firefighting during the hottest parts of the year. The boys were not as efficient as veteran firefighters in long drawnout battles. Still, they did aid immensely in preventing small fires from developing into huge holocausts.¹²

¹⁰Fred M. Johnson, "Guarding Arkansas Forests Against Fires," *The Arkansas Gazette Magazine*, 6 August 1933, p. 3.

¹¹Marshall Mountain Wave, 31 August 1934, p. 1.

¹²U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Report of the Chief of the Forest Service to the Secretary of Agriculture, for the Fiscal Year Ended 30 June 1935, pp. 22-23.

By the end of the CCC program, the State Forestry Commission could truly feel appreciation for the Civilian Conservation Corps. According to Fred H. Lang, Associate Forester in charge of CCC work, the Commission gained eighty critically needed observation towers. CCC boys built four district foresters' headquarters buildings and strung approximately 4000 miles of telephone lines. Truck trails, built by the CCC, greatly enhanced the mobility of fire suppression crews. The CCC constructed the Forestry Commission's first tree nursery, designed to produce ten million seedlings a year, at Bluff City in Nevada county. Translated into dollars, CCC contributions to the State Forestry Commission amounted to about \$4,174,000.¹³

CCC aid to the State Forestry Commission was not restricted to construction projects. In 1937, for instance, CCC crews, trained at the Fordyce camp, began mapping types of timber throughout the state. The ultimate aim of the project was to provide the Forestry Commission with an accurate map of every type of timberstand within the Commission's jurisdiction and the fire hazard connected with it. These data were extremely valuable to the Forestry Commission in that they provided the groundwork for the development of a state forestry program.¹⁴

¹³Lang, "Two Decades of State Forestry in Arkansas," p. 216.

¹⁴Arkansas, State Forestry Commission, Fourth Annual Report of the State Forestry Commission to the Governor, for the Year Ended 30 June 1937, p. 28.

The Civilian Conservation Corps provided labor for work projects in park areas as well as forest lands. The difference between a park and a forest lay in each unit's primary function. A forest area was developed for recreational purposes but its primary function was the preservation of trees, growing them as crops. The primary function of a national or state park was to preserve a particularly beautiful part of the wilderness, developing it for public recreational use.¹⁵

Arkansas' park system provided recreational facilities for citizens in virtually every part of the state. The only national park in the state system was located at Hot Springs. In 1832 the springs and four sections of land were saved from private enterprise by an Act of Congress and named Hot Springs Reservation. In 1921, the federal government converted the Reservation into Hot Springs National Park and increased it to 1,009 acres.¹⁶ All other parks in Arkansas were developed by the CCC and placed under the authority of the State Parks Commission.

Petit Jean was one of the more popular of the state parks. Located about fifteen miles west of Morrilton, Petit Jean State Park was accessible to about ten million people within a four hundred mile radius. First established

¹⁵Ray Hoyt, We Can Take It (New York, 1935), p. 41.

¹⁶Arno B. Cammerer, Hot Springs National Park (Washington, 1936), pp. 1-2; Camp Inspection Reports, Roll 1, U of A Library, Fayetteville.

as a state park on 116 acres in 1923, it eventually expanded to 2500 acres. Utilized extensively, the park became a major asset to Arkansas. During the 1930s, the park's major attraction was an eighty-five foot waterfall.

CCC work in the park involved the construction of a bathhouse and bathing beach, a boat dock, parking lot, water and sewage systems, and water treatment plants. Enrollees constructed four miles of park roads, along with ten miles of hiking and horseback riding trails.¹⁷ In 1936 the company working on the park, veterans' company 1781, won second place in a contest for the most nearly ideal camp in the Seventh Corps Area, achieving distinction for both the Arkansas District and the park itself.¹⁸

A second park established in the 1920s was Mount Nebo, five miles west of Dardanelle. Captain Joe Evans and Clem P. Thompson first opened Mount Nebo as a resort in 1853. The resort prospered until 1910 when business fell off due to bad roads. The automobile brought more people to the area in the twenties and the resort became a state park in 1928 with the addition of 793 acres of tax-forfeited land. Eventually, state officials expanded the park to 3,374 acres with the help of land grants.¹⁹

¹⁷Donaghey, Progress Report of the State Planning Board, pp. 61-64.

¹⁸Olive H. Nelson, "Civilian Conservation," Arkansas Gazette Magazine, 5 January 1936, p. 1.

¹⁹Donaghey, Progress Report of the State Planning Board, p. 64; Russellville Weekly Tribune, 11 January 1934, p. 2.

Businessmen in nearby Dardanelle made the initial push to bring a CCC camp to Mount Nebo. Their successful promotional efforts secured a CCC company early in 1933. The company cleared underbrush, built roads, cut foot trails, and erected small cottages. Other projects, designed as public recreational facilities, included amphitheatres, lakes, swimming pools, a lodge, and an amusement center with a large dancing pavilion.²⁰

In 1821 a veteran of the War of 1812, Benjamin Crowley, came to Northeastern Arkansas from Georgia. Crowley built a small plantation on land granted to him for military services rendered to the nation. In 1933 Crowley's land became the cornerstone of Crowley's Ridge State Park. The park was advantageously located on the extreme western slope of Crowley's Ridge in Greene county, about halfway between Jonesboro and Paragould. The major attraction of this 270-acre park was its three-acre lake. Besides developing recreational facilities about the lake, the CCC boys built a three thousand seat amphitheatre, four miles of park roads, and about five miles of foot trails.²¹

Another significant park provided recreational facilities for Arkansans living on the opposite side of the

²⁰Ibid.

²¹W.C. Adams, "Crowley's Ridge State Park Rapidly Converted Into Summer Playground," 31 May 1936 (Typewritten), WPA Research Files, Crowley's Ridge Folder, Arkansas History Commission, Little Rock; Donaghey, Progress Report of the State Planning Board, p. 64.

state. Devil's Den State Park, the pride of Northwest Arkansas, grew out of 1720 acres of tax-forfeited land in 1933 and expanded to over 3600 acres by 1935. The park embraced a tree-laden valley which was bisected by Lee Creek, meandering along the valley floor. Two CCC companies worked in the park, building fifteen miles of road, as well as a dam, swimming area, large pavilion, trails, and picnic areas.²² The CCC tried a new method of construction on the Devil's Den project in which the various barracks were designed as permanent park structures. Each structure housed between twenty and twenty-five boys. When the companies moved out, the barracks were converted into tourist cabins.²³ Impressed by a visit to the park in 1934, Roberta Fulbright, a Fayetteville journalist, reported: "I could with joy camp out there for a week. Colorado, California or New Mexico would ask nothing better to capitalize upon than our park region." Thinking in a community spirit, she went on to suggest that "Dogwood Day" should be held at the park in the spring and an autumn pageant in the fall.²⁴

Even in the early 1930s the valley, within which the park was situated, inspired creative thoughts. Supposedly,

²²Ibid.; Frank R. Allen, A Review of the WPA in Arkansas (Little Rock, 1935), p. 26.

²³"Devil's Den Camps Build for Beauty," Fayetteville Daily Democrat, 24 November 1934, pp. 1, 4.

²⁴Roberta Fulbright, "As I See It," Fayetteville Daily Democrat, 24 November 1934, p. 2.

early pioneers gave the area its name, Devil's Den, because of a constant roaring in the valley's featured cave. Even Lee Creek was romantically named after an Indian maiden called Leilola. According to the legend, two tribes were battling in the valley in the days of the mound builders, when, in the midst of the battle, part of a mountain collapsed, destroying both. Of course, Leilola loved a warrior from the opposing tribe. Seeing that her tribe and lover were lost, Leilola threw herself into the stream at the foot of the mountain and drowned. Through the years the stream became a creek and the name Leilola was shortened to Lee.²⁵

The donation of a 2500-acre plot of land to the state by a private citizen spawned Lake Catherine State Park. However, it took two years of concentrated efforts by the Governor, Congressman John L. McClellan, and the Malvern Chamber of Commerce to gain a CCC camp for the park. Within the park, the CCC built picnic areas, along with fish rearing ponds for the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. A major allurement in the park was the "Fishing Village," made up of boat docks, buildings, and other facilities handy for the fisherman. Only a few miles away from Hot Springs, the park included eight miles of

²⁵Ibid., 26 November 1934, p. 6; Allen, A Review of the WPA in Arkansas, pp. 23-24.

indented shoreline on the southern shore of Lake Catherine and quickly became a popular public fishing hole.²⁶

A state park developed by the CCC with an eye specifically on the fisherman and camper was Buffalo River State Park in the southern section of the Ozark Plateau. Established in 1938, the park covered 1748 acres and was selected for its natural beauty and ruggedness. CCC activities in the park involved the building of camping sites, cabins, comfort stations, picnic areas, and log shelters. All projects were designed to preserve the park's natural ruggedness as much as possible. The State Parks Commission pushed Buffalo River State Park as a "float fishing headquarters" suitable for trips on both the Buffalo and White Rivers.²⁷

Municipal parks in which the Civilian Conservation Corps employed its enrollees were Boyle and Fair municipal parks in Little Rock. CCC crews in Boyle Park built trails, a large pavilion, and facilities for the caretaker. In the 231-acre Fair Park, CCC boys worked on a keeper's lodge, public toilets, picnic areas, and roads.²⁸

²⁶"State to Have 38 CCC Camps Next Quarter," Arkansas Gazette (Little Rock), 10 September 1937, sec. 1, p. 3; Arkansas, States Parks Commission, Fourth Annual Report of the State Parks Commission to the Governor for the Period July 1, 1939 to July 1, 1940, p. 10. (Hereinafter cited as State Parks Commission Report.)

²⁷"Buffalo River State Park," n.d., Camp Inspection Reports, Roll 1, U of A Library, Fayetteville; Fourth State Parks Commission Report, p. 7 (Typewritten).

²⁸C.W.L. Armour to J.S. Billups, 15 February 1937, Camp Inspection Reports, Roll 5, U of A Library, Fayetteville; Fair Park inspection report, 3 September 1937, Ibid.

Undoubtedly, the Civilian Conservation Corps gave both the federal and state forestry officials invaluable assistance in preserving forest resources for the future. Park work throughout the United States was advanced by at least fifty years.²⁹ But just as important were the gains achieved by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the fight against the ruinous forces of soil erosion.

Soil erosion got out of hand in Arkansas in the period between 1900 and 1930. The trouble began when farmers tried to take advantage of a booming cotton market stimulated by the waste of World War I. Since cotton was virtually the only cash crop available, other than timber, farmers grew it relentlessly on upland rolling land until much of the topsoil was actually lost by 1930. Repeated crop failures, caused by the depleted fertility in the soil, led to the abandonment of farms. Thousands of acres in the countryside deteriorated into gullies and wasteland.³⁰

The Civilian Conservation Corps introduced soil conservation practices into the state. Beginning with the relatively informal soil conservation associations, the CCC was able to stimulate a state-wide soil conservation

²⁹U.S. Department of the Interior, CCC Program of the U.S. Department of the Interior, March 1933 to June 30, 1943, by Conrad L. Wirth (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1938), p. 30.

³⁰Gordon J. Swearingen, History of the Soil and Water Conservation District Movement in Arkansas (Little Rock, 1970), pp. 1-2.

program that was ultimately institutionalized into soil conservation districts supervised by the state government. The CCC camp represented the heart of each newly formed district, providing manpower and technical supervision for work projects on various cooperating farms. Boys working on soil conservation projects hauled and planted sod, built check dams on small creeks, filled in gullies, crushed and hauled limestone for fields, and planted trees.³¹

An example of soil conservation work may be found in a glance at CCC camp SCS-18 near Charlotte.³² The camp worked with 120 cooperating farms, covering a total area of 20,600 acres in Sharp, Lawrence, and Independence counties. On the various conservation projects, the farmers or "cooperators" plowed their fields into contour furrows while the CCC boys followed them, dropping Bermuda sod every three feet. Limestone was crushed and hauled to the work sites where it was spread by the cooperators. Some work crews from the camp did fire protection work on 7,000 acres of the district's woodland areas. Other crews cleaned and improved state land along county roads within the district.³³

³¹C.A. Lyons to the author, 30 November 1976.

³²The letters represented type of work and the number indicated the camp's "rank in point of selection." Harper, The Administration of the CCC, pp. 24-25.

³³Charlotte camp inspection report, 3 August 1939, Camp Inspection Reports, Roll 5, U of A Library, Fayetteville.

While most CCC crews were assigned to forests, parks, and soil conservation districts a few crews worked to build havens for wildlife. The White River Migratory Waterfowl Refuge had 95,000 acres of land and about 8,000 acres of lakes. The boundaries of the refuge claimed parts of Arkansas, Monroe, Desha, and Phillips counties in southeastern Arkansas. Three CCC camps worked on the refuge under the direction of the U.S. Bureau of Biological Survey. In addition to planting nutgrass, wild millet, and smartweed as food plants, CCC crews build levees, dams, and boat trails. Technical personnel assigned to the refuge gained eight headquarters buildings from the CCC, along with three 120-foot high enclosed observation towers. As a final touch to the project, CCC enrollees surrounded the refuge with a twenty-seven mile long, "hog tight," barbed wire fence.³⁴

Both state and federal governments used CCC work crews on side projects. CCC labor was utilized at Camp Pike for construction projects. The state turned to the CCC for work on its fish hatchery at Lonoke. The state fish hatchery was first established in 1928 but could only be developed intermittently due to a paucity of state funds. In 1931 work crews accomplished a small amount of

³⁴"White River Migratory Waterfowl Refuge," 1 November 1937, pp. 1-2 (Typewritten); Camp Inspection Reports, Roll 3, U of A Library, Fayetteville; Olive H. Nelson, "Fixing Up for Our Wild Fowl," Arkansas Gazette Magazine, 2 February 1936, p. 1.

work with funds from the Civil Works Administration. After 1933 the CCC continued the development of the project building eight fish ponds under the direction of the State Game and Fish Commission. Enrollees from Boyle Park worked the project as a side camp. Once in operation, the hatchery furnished the State Game and Fish Commission with an average of 1.5 million fish a year.³⁵

The Civilian Conservation Corps left indelible marks on Arkansas. Those marks were not scars but rather pleasant sights such as parks, protected forests, restored farm lands, and wildlife havens. In practically every way the CCC was successful in arresting the gradual destruction of the state's natural resources caused by years of irresponsible exploitation. In spite of the obvious achievements, the Corps could still lay claim to a greater accomplishment. For the first time in the nation's history an army went to war for the purposes of conserving and building rather than wasting and destroying. Such an accomplishment could never be measured in monetary terms.

³⁵Arkansas, Emergency Relief Administration, Director's Report to the Governor, for the Period April 1, 1934 to April 1, 1935, pp. 57-59; Donaghey, Progress Report of the State Planning Board, p. 60.

CHAPTER THREE

THE 200-MAN CAMPS

When a young man decided to devote at least six months of his life to the Civilian Conservation Corps, he committed himself to a unique environment. Living in a 200-man camp, he became a modified army recruit, immediately responsible to an army commander. But, at the same time, he worked at least eight hours a day under the supervision of civilians. For the most part he ate well, worked hard, and had the opportunity to further his education. If for some reason the boy disliked his new environment, he simply "went over the hill" without the fear of imprisonment. In effect, then, for most boys, the CCC camp represented a regulated haven against boredom and aimlessness.

At the peak of the conservation program the Civilian Conservation Corps operated a maximum of sixty-four camps in the Arkansas District. Work projects in the state claimed an average of thirty-seven camps a year.¹ Before entering these camps most enrollees reported for induction

¹U.S., Federal Security Agency, Civilian Conservation Corps, "A Brief Summary of Certain Phases of the CCC Program in Arkansas, April, 1933-June 30, 1942" (Typewritten copy), Pictographic entry No. 32, Record group No. 35, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (Hereinafter cited as FSA, "Summary of CCC Work in Arkansas.")

and conditioning at Camp Pike in Little Rock. Here they hiked, exercised, and learned about their new lifestyle.² By the end of a short training period, the boys were organized into recognizable companies, formed about cadres of seasoned enrollees.³ Once organized into companies, the green enrollees or "fresh meat" awaited orders to entrain and proceed to a camp site.

Arriving at the camp site, the enrollees built a small community administered by a camp overhead (camp administration) composed of army personnel, an educational adviser, and ranked enrollees. The camp commander stood at the peak of the camp administrative structure. Assisted by an executive officer, the camp commander saw to the clothing, feeding, housing, discipline, and entertainment of the enrollees.

Generally selected from the Organized Reserves, each camp commander stood in a rather exposed position. Because he supervised the final and most visible administrative unit of the CCC, investigators from the Director's Office as well as the District Headquarters closely observed his performance. The fact that enrollees were not

²William H. Wilson, "The Passing of the CCC," Arkansas Gazette Magazine, 13 December 1942, p. 8; "Through the Periscope of History," Co. 746, Camp Chatter, 15 June 1935, p. 1, CCC Camp Papers, University of Arkansas Library, Fayetteville.

³Regular army personnel helped establish the first companies but were quickly phased out after the initial six-month period.

regular soldiers meant that complaints sent to parents, congressmen, or even the Director and President more often than not resulted in immediate investigations. The geographical isolation of many camps only increased the challenge and threat of command for career-minded reserve officers.

The camp commander exercised limited authority when dealing with disciplinary problems. For light offenses he issued a simple admonition. He could also suspend an enrollee's privileges for one week so long as the punishment did not interfere with the enrollee's duties on the work project. Duty substitution, an old army favorite, provided the commander with a ready solution to many minor rule infractions. For more serious problems though, the commander could deduct up to three days of an enrollee's pay. Either an administrative or dishonorable discharge accrued to such offenses as refusal to work, absence without leave, continued or serious misconduct, and unwillingness to follow the rules of the CCC. Unlike the dishonorable discharge, the administrative discharge did not require the forfeiture of cash allowances and allotments. Both the administrative and dishonorable discharges required a hearing, representation by counsel, and appeal to higher authority if requested by an enrollee.⁴

⁴Harper, The Administration of the CCC, p. 45.

Major disciplinary problems were more the exception than the rule. The fact that most enrollees simply left the camp if they did not like the CCC diffused a great deal of potential dissension. Enrollees would naturally test a camp commander, attempting to see just how much they could get away with. But quick action on the part of the commander usually set things straight. For example, the youngest commander in the Arkansas District, First Lieutenant Bruce E. Kendall, had to administer two quick discharges when he first assumed command at Camp Lono, located about twelve miles from Malvern. His unhesitating reaction to a challenge of his authority gave him sufficient leverage to establish a relationship of mutual respect between himself and his enrollees.⁵

Along with discipline, logistics became an irritating field problem for commanders in isolated camps. The inefficient supply of perishable goods by private contractors resulted in a great deal of waste, particularly with bread rations. Camp commander M.N. Hildebrand provided at least one solution to the problem when he decided to bake his own bread. While commanding Camp Victor, situated in the midst of the Ozarks roughly forty-two miles north of Russellville, Lieutenant Hildebrand grew tired of paying for stale bread. Utilizing the educational aspect of the CCC, he trained two bakers and discontinued

⁵Kendall interview, 25 January 1977; Official Annual, p. 47.

his bread contract. Transferred to Mount Nebo, the baking lieutenant ferreted out two experienced bakers from among the veterans and established another camp bakery. After Mount Nebo, he moved on to Camp Shady near Mena. The success of Lieutenant Hildebrand's baking program prompted Colonel William Connelly, Arkansas District Commander, to establish a class of bakers at Camp Shady in 1934.⁶

Perhaps the bread baking was a small innovation but it did save ration money that could then be used for the purchase of kitchen supplies superior to that issued by the Corps.

The camp educational adviser occupied the civilian slot in the camp administrative overhead. Like the camp commander, the educational adviser also operated on a "do or die" basis. The U.S. Commissioner of Education appointed an adviser on the recommendation of the Educational Director of the CCC. The Corps Area Adviser made the actual appointment. After receiving his appointment, the educational adviser served anywhere in his corps area and could be dismissed at any time. An educational adviser had to be at least twenty-one years old, have a bachelor's degree, and preferably have at least two years of teaching experience. The adviser lived

⁶"Training Bakers at Mena," Co. 742, Flashes From Shady Gap, 14 December 1934, p. 1, CCC Camp Papers, U of A Library, Fayetteville; "Arkansas' First Dutch Oven, Beginning of Program for CCC Camps to be Built Here," Arkansas Democrat (Little Rock), 25 November 1934, p. 7.

in the camp but had to pay around \$15 a month for meals.⁷

In addition to the educational adviser and army personnel the administrative structure of the local camp included between twenty-two and twenty-eight enrollees. Classified as leaders, these enrollees earned \$45.00 a month. Their duties centered around camp administration and the supervision of work details. Assistant leaders earned \$36.00 a month, serving primarily in clerical positions. Kitchen police, first aid men, watchmen, truck drivers, and mechanics came from the ranks, drawing the standard thirty dollar paycheck.⁸

When the enrollees left the camp for the work project they followed orders issued by personnel from the Technical Services. Engineers, foresters, landscape men, history and wildlife technicians, and soil conservation experts provided the technical expertise and supervision for all conservation projects undertaken by the Civilian Conservation Corps. The camp commander had no authority on the project site.⁹

The Civilian Conservation Corps divided each of its work companies into two platoons of ninety-five and

⁷John E. King, "An Appraisal of the Educational Activities of the CCC in Arkansas" (M.S. thesis, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, 1936), pp. 48-49.

⁸Harper, The Administration of the CCC, p. 43; Co. 3777, Fair Park Breeze, 1 July 1936, pp. 3-5, CCC Camp Papers, U of A Library, Fayetteville.

⁹John A. Salmond, The CCC: A New Deal Case Study, p. 87.

ninety-six men. Thirty-two man sections constituted a single platoon. Sections were subdivided into two sixteen-man subsections. Finally, the subsections split into squads of six to seven men. Technical personnel worked on the project as foremen and enrollees oversaw small work details. Leaders supervised sections while assistant leaders directed subsections and enrollees from the ranks led squads.¹⁰

A major administrative grey area at the company level involved the operation of side camps. Supervised by foremen from the Technical Services, the camps became a significant bone of contention at the policy-making level of the Civilian Conservation Corps. The Technical Services argued that the camps were necessary for finishing projects left uncompleted by CCC companies transferred to new locations. Also, the existence of important projects not within the immediate vicinity of the main camps made side camps essential for serious conservation work. The Army argued that the camps were impossible to administer properly due to vague lines of authority and that poor administration endangered the health of enrollees.¹¹ The Director of the CCC ultimately settled the dispute

¹Harper, The Administration of the CCC, pp. 43-44.

²An excellent discussion concerning this debate between the Army and the Technical Services is found in Charles W. Johnson, "The CCC: The Role of the Army" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1969).

by allowing the use of side camps but under the extended authority of the camp commanders.¹²

In Arkansas, the Army could point to significant examples for the prosecution of its case in the debate. Company 768 at Blue Mountain Camp, for instance, maintained a side camp of ninety men about ten miles away from the main camp. During one inspection the main camp earned an excellent inspection report but the same inspector found the side camp in sorry shape. Enrollees wrestling in the sleeping area had broken several cots. The foreman in charge of the camp had taken no action to deal with an invasion of flies and an inadequate water supply ruled out baths for the enrollees.¹³ In a similar case at Camp Jackson Hill near Ivan, Inspector J.S. Billups found the operation of two side camps to be a significant drain on the administration of the main camp. With so many enrollees out of camp it proved nearly impossible to establish any type of effective educational program and at times the mess even suffered.¹⁴

Camp commanders and other administrative personnel dealt with difficult and sometimes unique situations in

¹²Kendall interview, 25 January 1977.

¹³Camp inspection report for Camp F-14 (Blue Mountain), 22 October 1934, Camp Inspection Reports, Roll 1, University of Arkansas Library, Fayetteville.

¹⁴J.S. Billups to W.G. Jones, 23 March 1936, Camp Inspection Reports, Roll 3, U of A Library, Fayetteville.

the pursuance of their duties. Participating in a new program, they found that many subjects, like the side camps discussed above, were simply not defined. Enrollees also faced the challenge of adapting to a new world. Indeed, many found themselves in a totally alien environment. Therefore, the 200-man camp became a testing ground for the Indians as well as the chiefs.

The first companies dispatched from Camp Pike served as pioneers, building their camps from scratch. Company 741, the first company organized in the Arkansas District, introduced the CCC to Arkansas' wilderness. Composed entirely of Little Rock boys, the company reached its camp site, about twenty miles west of Hot Springs and two miles south of Crystal Springs, on May 17, 1933 and found only a mess hall and kitchen ready for use.¹⁵ The second company formed in the state, Company 742, encountered even rougher conditions at their camp site in the Ouachita forest about sixteen miles southeast of Mena. Before the enrollees put up their tents, they had to clear the area of brush and rocks with axes and shovels borrowed from nearby Shady Ranger Station. With only two lanterns in the camp, they ate their first meal in the dark, after which they bedded down on sacks filled with straw. The

¹⁵Arnold Meyers, "Crystal Springs Is First to Get Forestry Workers," The Arkansas Weekly Magazine (in the Pocahontas Star Herald), 25 May 1933, p. 2; Bert Hanor, "CCC Camps in Garland County, 1933-37," Garland County Record (1974), pp. 63-64.

next day brought rain, soaking the enrollees as they erected the mess and hospital tents.¹⁶

Each camp assumed a character of its own but most contained the same types of buildings. Normally a CCC camp included a mess hall, recreational hall, headquarters buildings, hospital building, and wash house. Officers, technical personnel, and enrollees lived in separate barracks.¹⁷ Some camps, occupied for long periods of time, claimed workshops, separate educational buildings, and sports facilities. Water and electricity came from wells and small generators, located on the camp grounds.

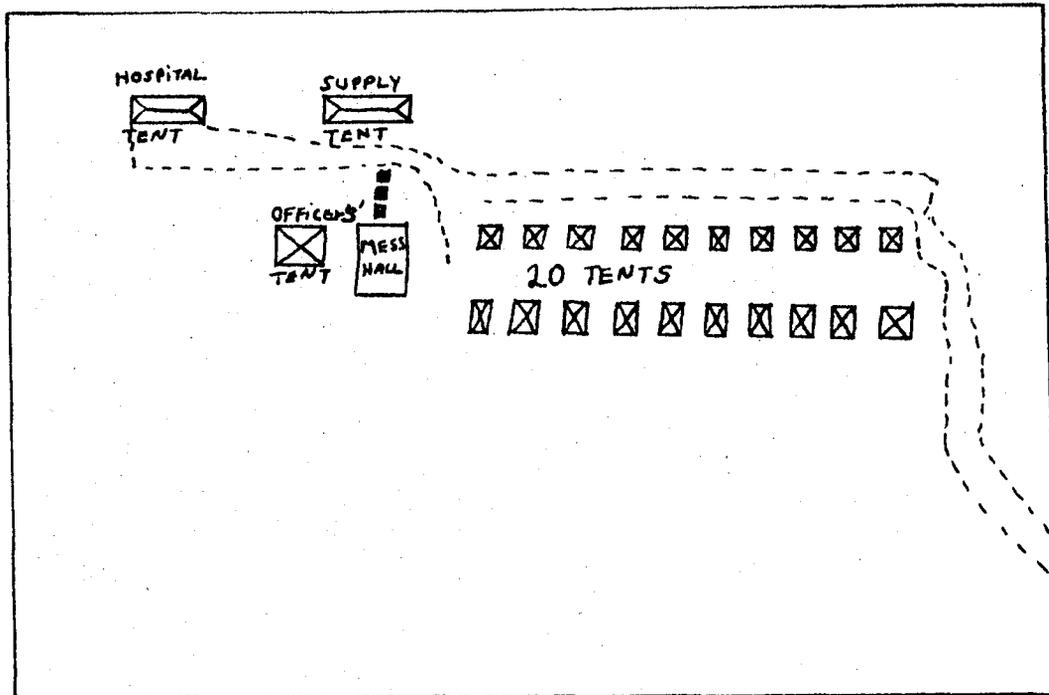
While most camps physically resembled one another, the Arkansas District did have a few camps established in rather unusual accommodations. One camp gaining widespread notoriety during the CCC program was occupied by Company 1741, working on the White River Waterfowl Refuge. Originally organized at Jefferson Barracks in St. Louis, Missouri, Company 1741 won distinction in 1934 for building the "best camp in the Seventh Corps Area." When the company came to Arkansas in 1936 it drew billets on river-boats, gaining distinction a second time as the only CCC navy in the country. In 1937 CCC officials changed

¹⁶Co. 742, Flashes From Shady Gap, October 1936, pp. 3-4, CCC Camp Paper, U of A Library, Fayetteville.

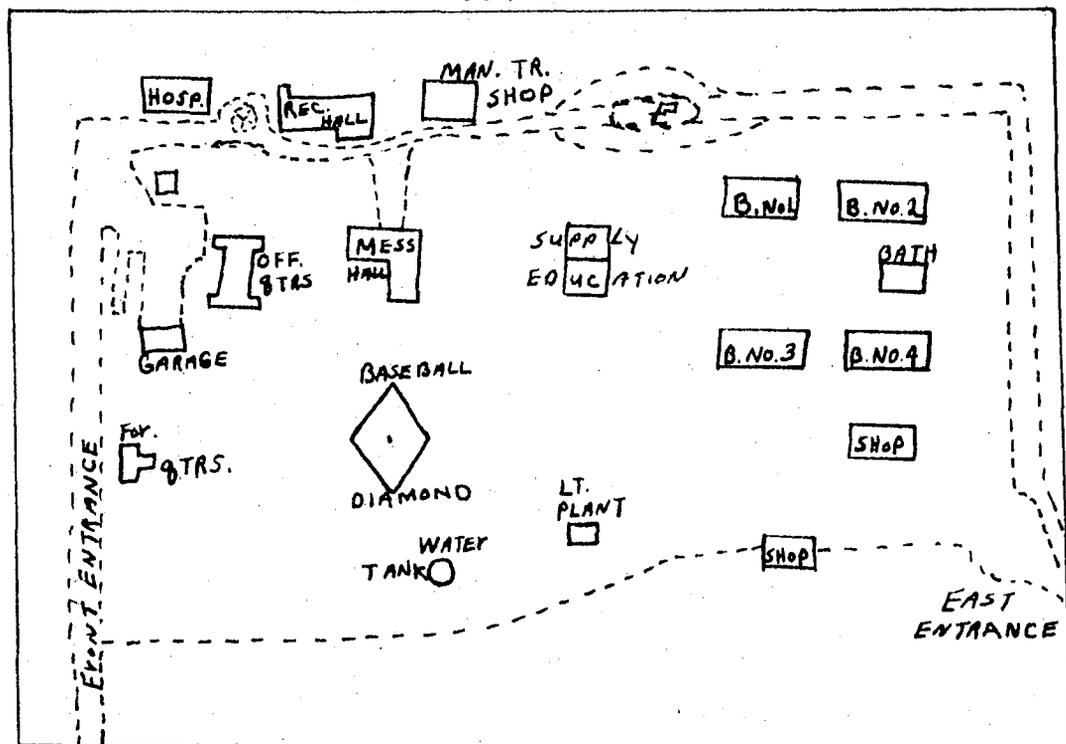
¹⁷Bob Berry, "Star Man Discovers New CCC Camp in Ouachitas," The Mena Weekly Star, 8 June 1933, p. 5; Co. 4748, The Dirt Dauber, 28 January 1936, p. 1, CCC Camp Papers, U of A Library, Fayetteville.

Growth at Camp Eagleton

1933



1937



Sketch by Lt. Duskin, camp adjutant, in the Eagleton Spoofer, 24 May 1937.

the company's "designation" from Missouri to Arkansas and the Missouri enrollees were replaced by Arkansans.¹⁸ The CCC fleet manned by Company 1741 consisted of six wooden quarterboats varying in length from seventy to 140 feet. Obtained by the Bureau of Biological Survey from the Army Corps of Engineers, the boats resembled old time paddle wheel steamers.¹⁹ Inspectors found the facilities on the boats comfortable and sanitary but lacking in proper recreational facilities. However, the boys working on the boats frequently viewed outdoor films and had access to different towns along the river.²⁰

Two other companies maintained unusual quarters in Little Rock. Enrollees from Company 3777 lived only a short distance from the downtown area. In fact, their quarters stood between the Arkansas State Hospital and the Municipal Zoo. The state capitol building lay only eighteen blocks away from the camp site.²¹ Company 3791 worked on construction and soil conservation projects at Camp Pike. Enrollees from this company were especially fortunate in that they could utilize parts of the National

¹⁸Official Annual, pp. 72-73.

¹⁹Ernie Deane, "Arkansas Once Had Its Own 'Navy'," Arkansas Gazette (Little Rock), 29 December 1963, p. 5E.

²⁰Camp inspection report for Camp BF-3 (St. Charles), 3 December 1937, Camp Inspection Reports, Roll 3, U of A Library, Fayetteville.

²¹Co. 3777, The Fair Park Breeze, August 1937, pp. 1-2, CCC Camp Papers, U of A Library, Fayetteville.

Guard Building. Facilities available to them included the gymnasium, dispensary, bath house, swimming pool, tennis and basketball courts, a baseball field, and a moving sound picture theatre.²²

Life within the many camps followed a relatively smooth schedule, barring forest fires and other natural disasters. The day began around 5:15 a.m. when the enrollees arose, made their beds, and cleaned up the barracks. Reveille sounded at 5:45 and the boys fell into formation to answer roll call and hear announcements. They ate breakfast at 6:00, answering sick call if necessary thirty minutes later. On certain days out of the week, classes met for an hour. Enrollees formed up for work call at 8:00. They worked until four in the afternoon, stopping an hour for lunch around 12:00. If the project was more than twenty minutes away, the enrollees ate lunch in the field; otherwise, they returned to camp for the noon meal. When the enrollees returned to camp, they cleaned up and fell in at 5:00 for retreat, the last formation of the day. After retreat they ate supper and used their free time for classes or recreational purposes until taps at 10:00.²³

²²Official Annual, pp. 132-33; Camp inspection report for Camp AR-1 (Little Rock), 13 December 1935, Camp Inspection Reports, Roll 1, U of A Library, Fayetteville.

²³Co. 746, Camp Chatter, 20 December 1937, p. 1, CCC Camp Papers, U of A Library, Fayetteville; Harper, The Administration of the CCC, p. 51.

Work in the Civilian Conservation Corps covered a wide range of construction and conservation projects. Enrollees built dams, lookout towers, telephone networks, roads, truck trails, bridle and hiking paths, residential and recreational structures, and boat docks, to name only a few of their efforts. Enrollees at the St. Charles camp on the White River Waterfowl Refuge even operated a sawmill.²⁴ In conservation work, CCC crews planted millions of seedlings, type-mapped hundreds of acres of forest land, treated millions of trees against disease, and reduced fire hazard by thinning out timberstands.

Each 200 man camp normally participated in several different types of work projects. However, some camps acquired certain areas of specialization during the course of their existence. County Line Camp, occupied by Company 768 and situated approximately six miles south of Blue Mountain Village in the Ouachita forest, built roads and cleaned along state highways. In forestry work, the camp fielded a special crew called "bushwhackers." Specializing in timberstand improvement, enrollee bushwhackers carried double bit axes and pocket whetstones. They became especially adept at girdling hardwood species of trees growing in pine thickets and removing pest-infested trees and logs from the forest.²⁵ In another part of the

²⁴Camp inspection report for Camp BF-1 (St. Charles), 17 December 1935, Camp Inspection Reports, Roll 2, U of A Library, Fayetteville.

²⁵Booneville Democrat, 15 February 1934, p. 4.

forest, work crews from Camp Slatington spent most of their time building "class two" roads. Topped with gravel, the roads measured fourteen feet wide in the cuts and sixteen feet wide in the fills. Work by the CCC on these roads saved the state about \$3000 a mile.²⁶

The work was not unreasonably hard, nor was the discipline in the camp harsh. Good camp commanders ensured that camp life was not only orderly but also interesting enough to maintain high morale. The largest problem, other than fighting among enrollees,²⁷ centered on drinking. In at least one instance, a camp commander dismissed a dozen enrollees for drunkenness.²⁸ Obviously, if the camp commander intended to maintain high morale, a middle ground had to be found where enrollees could be disciplined and entertained at the same time.

If one is to believe the various camp newspapers, enrollees lived relatively unencumbered, peaceful lives in the camps. In fact, the papers made the camps appear more like small high schools instead of work relief camps.

²⁶Steele Kennedy, "Bronzed Army of CCCs Threading Arkansas Forest Wilds With Roads, Camps," Arkansas Democrat (Little Rock), 21 October 1934, p. 9.

²⁷Interview with Russel L. Huddleston, Enrollee, Fayetteville, Arkansas, 5 January 1977.

²⁸Lt. Colonel William J. Connolly to Commanding General of Seventh Corps Area, 19 November 1934, Camp Inspection Reports, Roll 1, U of A Library, Fayetteville; The Batesville Record, 25 July 1935, p. 6.

Enrollees addressed one another with popular sobriquets such as Sweet Daddy McBryde, Three Hair Litton, Cagle Childers, and Sheepy Green.²⁹ Whether the camp papers were accurate or not in their depiction of life in the CCC, they did reinforce a sense of comradeship that pervades literature by and about the Civilian Conservation Corps. The boys definitely saw themselves as part of a nationwide body of which their camp and district represented only small organs. The CCC gave the boys an identity; an identity that they could evidently retain the rest of their lives.

Perhaps such attitudes stemmed from the efforts of many camp commanders to promote self-improvement, a constant theme of the Civilian Conservation Corps. Enrollees responded in unique and interesting ways. Two enrollees at Camp Hedges, near Calico, went the full distance when they bought typewriters and worked at becoming expert typists. They augmented their typing skills with studies in book-keeping, business arithmetic, commercial law, and English.³⁰ At another camp, the camp paper, The Eagleton Spoofer, published a list of 100 words each Saturday. Every Thursday the different barracks participated in a spelling test based on the weekly word list. The barracks

²⁹Co. 4754, The Alton Proverb, 27 February 1937, p. 13, CCC Camp Papers, U of A Library, Fayetteville.

³⁰Marshall Mountain Wave, 23 August 1935, p. 1.

with the highest average score won a prize from the camp exchange.³¹

Camp commanders quickly turned to sports as a major source of entertainment. Many camps formed track, basketball, and baseball teams which participated in camp tournaments and competed with local community squads.

Occasionally, a CCC boy caught the eye of a professional scout from the major leagues. Such was the luck of enrollee Carroll Wilson of Company 747, who won a pitching contract with the Cincinnati Reds.³² Communities in particular enjoyed CCC sports. Mena citizens, in a gesture of goodwill, helped nearby CCC officials set up a baseball league involving four CCC teams and the Mena American Legion team. The teams played doubleheaders almost every Saturday afternoon at Menafield.³³

For those enrollees not athletically inclined, most camps offered pool and ping pong tables, games, libraries, and woodworking shops. Enrollees often watched films and some F.E.R.A. theatrical troupes, as well as youth groups from nearby towns, entertained on week nights.³⁴ Candy,

³¹Camp inspection report for Camp F-1 (Eagleton), September 1934, Camp Inspection Reports, Roll 1, U of A Library, Fayetteville.

³²Co. 747, The Eagleton Spoofer, 20 August 1937, pp. 1, 4, U of A Library, Fayetteville.

³³The Mena Weekly Star, 27 July 1933, p. 3.

³⁴Cecil Williams, "Camp Frazier," Fayetteville Daily Democrat, 24 November 1934, p. 6.

tobacco, and other items could be purchased at the camp exchange. When assigned to camps near towns, enrollees went to movies, attended dances, and took advantage of other recreational facilities. Those enrollees seeking the comfort of the gospel attended church services in camp one night out of the week.

CCC life was not always serene, adventurous, and entertaining. Recreation could take a macabre turn, as seen in County Line Camp. Enrollees from this camp celebrated the opening of their new recreational hall by promoting a hound-badger fight. With enrollees and local citizens looking on, the strongest hounds of the camp's pack fought a single badger in a death match. The hounds won but only one black Gordon Setter survived to claim the victory.³⁵ Safety was a by-word in the CCC but accidents proved to be inevitable. One truck accident, for example, killed two enrollees and injured seven others from Camp Ozone when the driver failed to negotiate a turn on a precipitous mountain road.³⁶ Sickness placed some camps under lengthy quarantine periods. Bad food caused dissension in a few camps. Inefficient selection agents created problems in other camps by sending boys into the CCC with false illusions about a vacation in the woods.³⁷

³⁵Booneville Democrat, 15 February 1934, p. 4.

³⁶Fayetteville Daily Democrat, 16 November 1935, p. 1.

³⁷J.S. Billups to J.J. McEntee, 16 December 1935, Camp Inspection Reports, Roll 1, U of A Library, Fayetteville.

Veterans' camps particularly plagued CCC officials with problems and complaints. Not surprisingly, camp life did not hold the promise of adventure for men who found adjustment at an advanced age difficult.³⁸

Education became an important part of the CCC even though the primary function of the Corps fell under the category of work relief. Acting on requests from enrollees and camp commanders, Director Fechner authorized educational classes in the camps as early as May, 1933. The first classes focused mostly on vocational topics with army and technical personnel doing the teaching. On November 22, 1933 President Roosevelt gave the educational program a significant boost by incorporating the U.S. Office of Education into the CCC under the authority of the Army. By June, 1934 the educational program received its full complement of educational advisers and went into operation. In 1937 the Congress designated the CCC as a separate agency within the Executive Department. The same act gave education statutory recognition, requiring all camp commanders to devote at least ten hours a week to classes.³⁹

³⁸Kendall interview, 25 January 1977; Roosevelt included WWI veterans in the Corps as a conciliatory gesture to the Bonus Army.

³⁹Frank E. Hill, The School in the Camps (New York, 1935), pp. 8-10; Alexander J. Stoddard, The CCC, the National Youth Administration and the Public Schools (Washington, D.C., 1941), pp. 12, 17.

The creation of a viable educational program presented the camp educational adviser with a most formidable challenge. Specifically, he had to create a program in which he could gain the interest of students ranging from illiterates to college graduates. The average Arkansas enrollee had just over seven years of formal scholastic training and cared little for traditional classroom work.⁴⁰ Seeking a workable format, most advisers developed informal discussion groups or seminars. Class subjects ranged from physics to table manners. Receiving only \$100 per camp for educational equipment, educational advisers frequently had to play the role of scavenger.⁴¹ Some of them achieved impressive results. Camp Eagleton, for example, built a library, two classrooms, a reading room, and a printing-mimeograph room.⁴²

Besides merely attending classes, enrollees in the Arkansas District could earn eighth grade certificates which were signed by the District Commander, the Commissioner of Education of Arkansas, and their respective camp advisers.⁴³ Beyond that most camps maintained libraries often holding several hundred books and various types of magazines.

⁴⁰King, "Education in Arkansas," p. 28.

⁴¹Hill, The School in the Camps, p. 15.

⁴²Co. 747, The Eagleton Spoofer, 10 June 1938, p. 9, CCC Camp Papers, U of A Library, Fayetteville.

⁴³Camp inspection report for Camp SCS-11 (Jacksonville), 9 February 1938, Camp Inspection Reports, Roll 4, U of A Library, Fayetteville.

Camp educational programs differed throughout the Arkansas District. At Camp Damascus, the home of Veteran's Company 3781, educational courses focused on topics such as auto mechanics, office practices, woodworking, truck driving, radio repair, arithmetic, first aid, and cooking. The educational program at Camp Cass, occupied by a junior company, offered such diverse classes as dramatics, photography, typewriting, commercial law, world history, and bookkeeping. The Headquarters Company in Little Rock sponsored college-oriented courses like business arithmetic and spelling, chemistry, physics, and public speaking.⁴⁴ Enrollees assigned to camps with inadequate educational programs could take correspondence courses from the University of Arkansas' General Extension Service. Enrollees paid a discounted price of \$1.50 per course plus the cost of textbooks. Completed courses could be used to satisfy entrance requirements for the university.⁴⁵

The opportunity to gain accredited course work while living in the camp was an invaluable bonus for boys forced to drop out of school because of the depression.

⁴⁴Camp education report for Camp SCS-5 (Damascus), n.d., Camp Inspection Reports, Roll 4, U of A Library, Fayetteville; Camp inspection report for Camp F-9 (Cass), 2 May 1940, Roll 2, U of A Library, Fayetteville; Camp inspection report for Headquarters Company (Little Rock), 22 April 1936, Roll 1, Inspection Reports, U of A Library, Fayetteville.

⁴⁵Fayetteville Arkansas Traveler (University paper), 3 October 1935, p. 1; Williams, "Camp Frazier," Fayetteville Daily Democrat, 24 November 1934, p. 6.

But the Arkansas District went even further in aiding the boys to improve themselves and, consequently, enhance their chances of finding employment after leaving the CCC.

In 1937 First Lieutenant John C. Meador, Commander of Company 3783 at Jonesboro, project superintendent G.F. Castleberry, and adviser Joe E. Covington created a "school center." According to their idea, promising enrollees transferred to camps located near certain colleges and high schools for the express purpose of attending classes. The boys worked their forty-hour work week and attended classes at night.⁴⁶ The school center idea enabled enrollees to take courses from college professors and professional high school teachers at established educational institutions. Meanwhile, educational advisers devoted more time to enrollees with less developed scholastic backgrounds. Enrollees were selected for participation in the program on the basis of previous education, length of service in the CCC, and their ability to provide extra money for tuition, books, and school supplies. By 1939 enrollees had earned a total of 1576 semester hours toward college work through the school center program.⁴⁷

⁴⁶Alvin A. Katt, "Going to School in the CCC," The Arkansas Gazette Magazine, 27 November 1938, p. 1; Co. 3783, Billy Goat Banner, April 1937, pp. 1, 4, CCC Camp Papers, U of A Library, Fayetteville.

⁴⁷Camp inspection report for Camp SCS-7 (Jonesboro), 31 July 1939, Camp Inspection Reports, Roll 4, U of A Library, Fayetteville; Co. 746, Camp Chatter, 27 August 1938, p. 3, Camp CCC Papers.

Jonesboro became the first college center established in the state. While attending Arkansas State College, boys worked on the camp's soil conservation projects on Crowley's Ridge. Enrollees attending the college took courses such as freshman English, agricultural economics, American and world history, physics, the mathematics of finance, and child psychology. Vocational courses included agronomy, cooking, engineering, type-writing, woodland management, and woodwork. An average of thirty boys a year attended the college, participating in classes four nights a week. Technical personnel taught vocational courses in the camp on Wednesday and Friday mornings.⁴⁸ In 1940 the Jonesboro camp earned further distinction, becoming a "specialized unit" in which young men interested in aviation could study aeronautics in cooperation with the Civil Aeronautics Authority unit stationed at Arkansas State College.⁴⁹

CCC officials in the Arkansas District established other college centers at Russellville, Magnolia, and Monticello. Enrollees transferred to Company 3784 at Camp Shiloh, near Russellville, attended classes at Arkansas Polytechnic College. Those enrollees not attending college classes had the option of attending

⁴⁸Ibid., 8 March 1938.

⁴⁹"Jonesboro to Be Specialized Unit," Arkansas Democrat, 25 November 1940, p. 20.

classes at Russellville High.⁵⁰ Members of Company 794, near Monticello, had access to Arkansas A & M and, more importantly, to Monticello Business College. Magnolia A & M accepted boys from Company 4732. The Jacksonville and Halsey camps served parallel roles as high school centers.⁵¹

While the 200-man camp proved to be an efficient administrative unit, it was also a significant testing ground. Young officers and teachers learned their professions under the most trying of conditions. Mistakes did not go unnoticed and the opportunity for individual creativity to burgeon was great. On the enrollee side, young boys could, if they chose, develop skills and improve their educational background. The 200-man camp became a place where their adaptability could be tested just as it did for their superiors. In the last analysis, then, the primary value of the 200-man camp was that it provided a unique environment in which all those so desiring could discover themselves. Every individual should have such an opportunity.

⁵⁰Camp inspection report for Camp SCS-8 (Russellville), 17 February 1938, Roll 4, Camp Inspection Reports, U of A Library, Fayetteville.

⁵¹Camp inspection report for Camp SCS-15 (Monticello), 11 September 1935, Camp Inspection Reports, Roll 5, U of A Library, Fayetteville; Co. 794, Monticello Messenger, 21 October 1935, CCC Camp Paper, U of A Library, Fayetteville; Camp inspection report for Camp SCS-14 (Magnolia), 7 June 1937, Roll 5, U of A Library, Fayetteville.

CHAPTER FOUR

GLIMPSES OF CAMP LIFE THROUGH VERSE

The Civilian Conservation Corps scooped up over two million young men during the depression. The Arkansas District contributed 69,038 men to the program. Another 6,511 Arkansans served the CCC as non-enrolled personnel.¹ An interesting view of life in such an immense organization may be obtained from descriptions written by those administering and visiting the camps. However, enrollee poetry particularly points up the ambience of camp life and aids the researcher in understanding the primary value of the Civilian Conservation Corps.

The average enrollee was supposedly nineteen years old, weighed 147 pounds, and stood about five feet and eight inches tall. He averaged just over eight years of formal education and spent one year in the CCC.² In short, most boys entered the Corps at a very malleable stage of life. Therefore, the CCC became a crucial influence in the lives of many young men, especially in the areas of hope and self-confidence. As demonstrated in the following

¹Records of the CCC, "Summary of CCC Work in Arkansas."

²James J. McEntee, The CCC at Work (Washington, D.C., 1941), p. 7.

poem by enrollee H.D. Bryant, the CCC played its important role by splashing enrollees with a brief but unforgettable life experience.

Gang around boys and listen to me
I'll give you the history of the CCC.
When you enroll you can hardly wait
For the time to go, the hour and date.

You arrive at Camp, you are dumb and green.
You meet the craziest boys you have ever seen.
They line you up and march you around
Swear you in and put your name down.

They give you some shots and gee they hurt
Then a pair of gloves and put you to work.
If it's in the summer you almost die
And the water they have won't half satisfy.

When they ring the bell we know the call
Supper is ready at the old mess hall.
When you get there it is spuds and beans
For the hungriest boys you ever have seen.

They drag around and some are sick
And the sorry boys are easy picked.
One plays off but he's not sick
He's what's known as a goldbrick.

But the CCC'er that's not sick or lame
Does lots of work and plays a fair game.
So don't lowrate him or run him down
For the CCC boy is the best in town.³

As one might suspect, the enrollee's first few days in camp were the roughest. Rookie enrollees quickly learned the ropes of their new trade by looking for such important tools as sky hooks, left-handed monkey wrenches, striped paint, and tent stretchers.⁴ According to

³Co. 746, Camp Chatter, 25 June 1938, p. 3, CCC Camp Papers, University of Arkansas Library, Fayetteville.

⁴Ibid., 25 July 1938, p. 2.

rookie enrollee Carroll Davis, this early learning period was one of immense tribulation.

We are now at Camp Shady,
And we've been here several days,
We are cussed by everybody,
For our mistakes and delays.

But so many things are new here,
That we often do things wrong;
Yet we all have learned to be there,
When they sound the old mess gong.

When we hear the whistle blowing,
Every man is on his feet;
And we rush out fully knowing,
Some new task we're soon to meet.

While the old men gather round us,
Loudly voicing their distaste
For our presence, and they tell us
That we'll work and no time waste.

So it goes both night and morning,
Sleeping, eating, working, and play;
We have hopes of some day learning,
What to do as well as they.⁵

Few boys left the CCC unchanged. In fact, if the rookie survived his first few days in camp, he became a new type of individual. At some point in his early training period he underwent a metamorphosis, developing from a neophyte into an old hand who carried his own weight. One enrollee noticed this remarkable transformation in himself.

When I first joined this CCC camp,
I must have been a sight;
A sorta shiftless, careless bird?
I guess that's true alright.

⁵Co. 742, Flashes From Shady Gap, October 1936, p. 4, CCC Camp Papers, U of A Library, Fayetteville.

But boy, oh boy, a change has come,
 Into my little dome.
 This regularity of life
 Oft reminds me of home.

This making my bunk each day,
 And straightning out my shack,
 And seeing that my clothes are hung
 Up neatly on the rack.

And washing dishes by the way,
 And shirts and breaches too,
 It's work I never did at home,
 All that, my Ma would do.

But what I been a wondering is;
 Just what will mother say,
 If I do all these things myself,
 When I go home to stay?

At least I've garnered this one thought
 In CCC life you see,
 That self-reliant, after all,
 Is what you've gotta be.⁶

Becoming a full member of the team, the new enrollee lived a life divided between work, study, and recreation. Frequently, though, the placid routine of his new life would be smashed by a natural disaster requiring his untiring services. Fighting forest fires, for example, demanded the utmost of an enrollee's stamina. The enrollee poet writing below points out quite effectively how fighting a long campaign against a most pernicious enemy quickly became anything but romantic and adventurous.

Here you are friends, the story I'll tell
 I'm here in the CCC next door to the fire bell.
 In hell they say its fire and brimstone,
 But in the CCC its fire alone.

⁶Co. 4731, The Friendship Press, February 1937,
 p. 8, Ibid.

When the fire bell rings its time to run
 To get the pitchfork, rake, and water gun.
 It doesn't matter if night or day
 Nor what you're doing--you're on your way.

The weather is hot, you may be tired.
 They tell you to hurry and "let's get around."
 But you're hot and bothered and don't give a dam.

You go out after supper, stay out most of the night.
 The fire was a big one and sure hell to fight.
 The fire is in a thicket and the night's awful dark.
 You back up in the shadows and see a log there
 and park.

But you've sat there but a moment
 When you hear the leader yell,
 "Either come out of that there thicket
 Or I'll mark you AWOL!"

Then you get up and start cussing
 You just don't give a dam
 You cuss the CCC and the Captain
 Then you start on Uncle Sam.

But when this life is over
 You'll hear St. Peter yell,
 "Come on all you CCC boys,
 You've done your time in hell."⁷

Membership in any organization sooner or later
 requires the performance of undesirable tasks. In the CCC
 an enrollee occasionally passed some time helping out in
 the camp mess hall. The enrollee below explains this more
 onerous side of life.

Washing dishes, peeling spuds,
 Ruining your hands in strong soap suds.
 That's K.P.

Making slaw, using a dish towel,
 Don't ever have time to see your gal.
 That's K.P.

⁷H.D. Bryant, "The Fire Fighter's Plea," Co. 746,
Camp Chatter, 20 November 1936, p. 1, Ibid.

All the cooks griping cause you work too slow,
 But the fact is you've worked till you just
 can't go.

That's K.P.

You're sleepy and grouch till you want to fight.

That's K.P.

But its not all bad, of course there's some good,
 And you could make it better if you just would.

You K.P.s

You can watch your words and soften your heart,
 And things will go better than they did at the start.

That's K.P.⁸

Of course, in the CCC there were various ways to
 escape performing one's duty. Enrollees who concentrated
 on avoiding the more onerous of camp chores usually found
 the means. In the CCC the camp hospital was an obvious
 haven in which an enrollee could retire for a short rest.

We all want to make hospital,
 Just why we can't explain.
 For after we are hospitalized
 We wish we were out again.

We see the other fellow make it,
 And that gives us a thought.
 That fellow can make hospital
 A way for us is sought.

We are very much delighted
 The Doc says stay in today.
 We don't care if we are slighted
 For we're sure to get our pay.

Who cares to take a few pills.
 Or a dose of oil or salts?
 To get to lie quiet and still,
 And think of the other fellow's faults.

And lie and read a book
 Or listen to your favorite crooner
 Or dream dreams of a babbling brook
 And when you'll be a honeymooner.

⁸Clyde C. Horton, "That's K.P.," Co. 3780, Camp Sage News, in Batesville Record, 24 October 1935, p. 6.

Well, we've made hospital
 It is all nice and quiet
 We can sleep or write our pals
 And tell them of Camp Sage life.

And when we are free again
 Whether at work or pulling a trick
 The boys yell and yell again
 That guy is a "gold brick!"⁹

The boys gained notable benefits from the CCC. They ate three meals a day, had a roof over their heads, and enjoyed a great deal of free time for recreation. Still, the Civilian Conservation Corps provided the enrollees with that most basic of all incentives--money.

Pay Day!
 Hear that whistle blow?
 That's what we've been waiting for
 Now a month or more.

Watch them run to get in line,
 Most everyone is broke;
 With eager hands they take the bills,
 And almost smile out loud.

Doc has planned to get some clothes,
 While Fat will stuff and eat,
 Tommy hopes to soon be drunk,
 And Jim has bills to meet.

Here's the gambling boys again,
 No matter, win or lose,
 Excitement's all they crave right now,
 And dice is the game they choose.

Several have to pay their debts,
 And want to borrow more,
 And others hit direct for town,
 And hope to find a "Lady Friend."

⁹Ray King, "We Want to Make Hospital," Ibid., 21 November 1935, p. 8.

Pay Day's what we all work for,
 For who would strive to win,
 If we got nothing in return,
 Or no money to spend?¹⁰

No doubt the pay was a major calling card for the CCC. But many enrollees saw the Corps in a more significant role. Some believed the Corps gave them a special opportunity worthy of their best efforts. Others appreciated the Corps as a unique school of life in which they could learn about themselves as well as other people.¹¹ While few enrollees probably felt the strong emotion suggested in the poem below, most must have retained at least an admiration and some gratitude for the Civilian Conservation Corps.

Our search for work became a roam,
 CCC, my CCC.

You took us in without a home,
 CCC, my CCC.

We asked for bread and got a pone,
 We asked for meat, had not a bone,
 You gave us both without a groan,
 CCC, my CCC.

We'll save your fields in every clime,
 CCC, my CCC.

We'll plant your trees of every kind,
 CCC, my CCC.

¹⁰Dale Cheek, "Pay Day," Co. 742, Flashes From Shady Gap, 22 February 1935, p. 2, CCC Camp Papers, U of A Library, Fayetteville.

¹¹Eddie Denton, "Why I Like the CCC Camp," Co. 3780, Camp Sage News, in Batesville Record, 5 September 1935, p. 6; Co. 747, The Eagleton Spoofer, 8 October 1935, p. 2, CCC Camp Papers, U of A Library, Fayetteville.

We love your fields so very fine,
 We love your forests and sunshine,
 Our love for thee will Ne'er decline,
 CCC, my CCC.

Your sons so true and light and ever brave,
 CCC, my CCC.

Will do your work both light and grave,
 CCC, my CCC.

Our homes and land, we'll help to save,
 When want and hunger would enslave,
 Where'er we go we will engrave,
 CCC, my CCC.

Your dearest name we love to lisp,
 CCC, my CCC.

We'll do your work at any risk,
 CCC, my CCC.

Let come what may of cloud and mist,
 If storms upon you do insist,
 We'll never leave thee nor desist,
 CCC, my CCC.¹²

An interesting feature of the Civilian Conservation Corps was its nearly catholic popularity. Few people actively opposed the organization and those who did never did so on principle alone. The same held true for the youth participating in the Civilian Conservation Corps program. A general expression of approbation, as expressed in the poem above, was confirmed by a small survey conducted by the American Council on Education in the final days of the CCC. Council representatives interviewed 419 CCC enrollees, 224 of which had left the Corps. According to their findings, 71 per cent of those who had left the

¹²Kenneth W. Wright, "My CCC," Co. 3780, Camp Sage News, in Batesville Record, 8 August 1935, p. 6.

Corps wanted to return and 81 per cent of those still in the camps intended to reenroll. Of the total group, 69 per cent felt they were better off than their friends for having gone to the CCC.¹³

Reading enrollee poetry leads the researcher to an important conclusion concerning the significance of the Civilian Conservation Corps to those boys serving in it. Instead of loitering on street corners, drifting aimlessly, and sleeping in cold or hot box cars, the boys found themselves leading regulated lives and sleeping on clean sheets without hunger pangs. No longer hungry, they could think about the future in more confident and positive terms. Most importantly of all, the Civilian Conservation Corps aided its boys in developing and, in some cases, saving that vital psychological force known simply as self-respect.

¹³Kenneth Holland and Frank E. Hill, Youth in the CCC (Washington, D.C., 1942), p. 236.

CHAPTER FIVE

CCC CAMPS AND ARKANSAN COMMUNITIES

A significant element in the success of the Civilian Conservation Corps lay in the acceptance of its camps by communities located near them. CCC officials precluded potential community hostility by enrolling some 35,000 local experienced men in 1933 and continued the practice for the duration of the program.¹ Fortunately, most camps and communities maintained major economic and social ties, developing a mutually beneficial rapport. However, such a relationship involved at least a few pitfalls and the CCC could not take its initial popularity for granted.

The immediate response of CCC units to natural and man-made disasters especially bolstered favorable public relations. In 1934 Company 742 joined a task force of one thousand fire fighters in a four-day campaign against an incendiary fire, quickly demonstrating the practical value of the camps.² A more spectacular demonstration came with the great flood of 1937, when the Civilian Conservation Corps assisted the Army and Red Cross in caring for flood refugees and protecting private property.

¹Dorothy D. Bromley, "The Forest Army That Lives by Work," New York Times, 23 July 1933, sec. 8, p. 2.

²Official Annual, pp. 36-37.

The commander of the Seventh Corps area, Major General Stanley H. Ford, coordinated relief activities from headquarters established in Little Rock. Working from this central location, he dispatched provisional CCC truck companies to critical areas for logistical duties. Along with a command structure, the Corps contributed several of its camps to the relief effort. Company 4734, a Negro company encamped near Forrest City, was actually the first formal organization responding to the needs of flood refugees in Northeast Arkansas. Working for two weeks, the enrollees supplied temporary shelter and food for over 7000 people. CCC camps not only helped flood victims but also quartered Army troops brought in from other states to aid in the rescue work. Enrollees repaired a dangerous break in the St. Francis river levee and one company, Company 1711 of Pocahontas, managed to rescue as many as one hundred persons in a single day.³

On a much smaller scale, individual acts of heroism not only boosted the image of the CCC but also gave communities local heroes. In 1937, for instance, Grady W. Smith, an enrollee from Company 746, made an impressive rescue when he saved three 4-H girls from drowning in the Saline river. His efforts earned him a certificate of

³Co. 746, Camp Chatter, 20 February 1937, p. 1, CCC Camp Papers, University of Arkansas Library, Fayetteville.

valor, the highest award in the Civilian Conservation Corps, as well as a personal commendation from Director Fechner.⁴

Communities undoubtedly appreciated the CCC in times of danger. But a more significant element in harmonious camp-community relations evolved from the national and local economic ramifications of the Corps. Indeed, the Civilian Conservation Corps became one of the quickest and perhaps most efficient means of pumping large sums of money into the nation's depressed economy. By the end of its first year of operation, the Corps had cost the federal government a total of \$296,127,000. Its significance to private enterprise may be seen in the fact that CCC officials spent over \$11,000,00 on vehicles alone during its first year of operation.⁵

In Arkansas, the Corps expended a total of \$64,173,024 of which \$17,466,630 went directly to enrollee dependents. Consequently, communities throughout the state gained significant amounts of capital.⁶ In more mundane terms, it took \$500 to maintain an enrollee in camp for a

⁴Co. 746, Camp Chatter, 30 April 1938, p. 1, Ibid.

⁵U.S. Civilian Conservation Corps, Office of the Director, Second Report of the Director of Emergency Conservation Work, for the Period April 5, 1933 to March 31, 1934, pp. 12-13.

⁶Records of the CCC, "A Brief Summary of Certain Phases of the CCC Program in Arkansas, April, 1933-June 30, 1942" (Typewritten copy), Pictograph entry No. 32, Record Group No. 35, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

single six-month enrollment period. Out of that sum, \$320 went to administrative costs with the remainder going to the enrollee and his dependents.⁷

Probably the most important ally of the CCC in each community was the local Chamber of Commerce. Businessmen actively sought enrollee customers with page-length ads in local newspapers. Local merchants had good reason for optimism. One community estimated that a single 200-man camp expended a monthly payroll of \$5000.⁸ In another area of business, building contractors bid on lucrative construction projects within the camps. The Russellville Plumbing and Heating Company, for example, won the plumbing contracts for five CCC camps at one time. Even individual landowners fell into easy profits. In one case a Charlotte merchant, Marvin Fallis, leased forty acres of his land to the federal government for the location of the Charlotte CCC camp.⁹

The economic benefits derived from CCC camps prompted active competition among communities and placed additional pressures on Congressmen. This competition created an interesting web of community alliances. The town of Mountain View offered one demonstration of the

⁷J.J. McEntee, The CCC: What It Is and What It Does (Washington, D.C., 1941), p. 8.

⁸Mena Weekly Star, 18 May 1933, p. 1 and 1 June 1933, p. 5.

⁹Weekly Tribune (Russellville), 18 May 1933, p. 1; Batesville Record, 1 July 1935, p. 1.

community alliance system in 1933. Citizens of the town offered the federal government a twenty-acre fairground site within the city for the location of a CCC camp. When the proffered site lost out to one located twelve miles out of town, about midway between Mountain View and Calico Rock, Mountain View community leaders enlisted the support of Batesville residents in an unsuccessful attempt to capture the proposed camp by applying pressure on the district's Congressman, John E. Miller.¹⁰ On another occasion, the CCC company working on Petit Jean State Park was ordered to the Buffalo River State Park. A telegram campaign led by the Morrilton Junior Chamber of Commerce and supported by seven other civic organizations from neighboring towns managed to persuade the National Park Service to leave a fifty-man side camp in the park for the purpose of tying up loose ends.¹¹

Efforts to retain camps also involved delicate negotiations between officials representing city, state, and federal governments. In 1935 the National Park Service threatened to remove the CCC company at Mount Nebo State Park because of difficulties in acquiring park land from landowners. The Dardanelle Chamber of Commerce worked with the State Park Commission as well as the National Park

¹⁰Weekly Tribune (Russellville), 31 January, p. 1, 21 March, p. 1, and 6 June 1935, p. 1.

¹¹Morrilton Headlight, 4 July 1941, p. 1, Article in CCC Folder, WPA Research Files, Arkansas History Commission, Little Rock.

Service in an effort to retain the camp. Officials went so far as to propose a rather unique compromise in which land-owners exchanged land in the middle of the park for sites along its perimeter. The negotiations were long but fruitful, allowing the CCC camp to complete its assigned work project.¹²

Obviously, the acquisition of CCC camps for Congressional districts and communities became major prizes for many politicians. In fact, the political value of the Corps became so great that Congressmen revolted against the President in 1936 when he planned to reduce the CCC from 400,000 to 300,000 men. Backed by tons of mail from communities fearing the loss of camps, over two hundred Congressmen banded together planning to block the President's move. Roosevelt retreated discreetly and closed only those camps completing their work projects.¹³

The political cat-fight over the location of camps was minor in comparison to the threat which confronted the Corps when politicians tried to convert many of its technical positions into mere patronage jobs. Many people feared the CCC would become riddled with incompetent political appointees. Even though the Technical Services

¹²Weekly Tribune (Russellville), 31 January, p. 1, 21 March, p. 1, and 6 June 1935, p. 1.

¹³Roosevelt's chief motive in this action stemmed from his desire to reduce government expenditures in preparation for the 1936 presidential campaign. Salmond, The CCC: A New Deal Case Study, pp. 65-67.

fought the patronage issue with sword and shield, Democratic Congressmen generated enough pressure to win a few political appointees to technical positions. Fortunately, encroachment of politics does not appear to have weakened the CCC in any serious manner. A survey taken in 1936 revealed that out of 18,000 technical employees holding potential patronage jobs, only 3600 obtained them from Congressional lists. Those men holding political appointments were generally found to be proficient at their work.¹⁴ Perhaps one major reason for such a high rate of competency resulted from the practical response of the Department of Agriculture to the situation. Within the department, the Forest Service created lists of individuals judged qualified to hold technical positions in the CCC. Making selections from these lists, Congressmen could settle political debts and provide the Corps with competent personnel at the same time.¹⁵

The Arkansas District did not escape the patronage game. The dismissal of Thurman W. Lancaster, CCC project supervisor assigned to the Buffalo River State Park, marked one particularly blatant case. Officially, the National Park Service dismissed Lancaster for participating in a political rally. However, Special Investigator J.B. McConnell found that Lancaster was not guilty of

¹⁴Salmond, The CCC: A New Deal Case Study, pp. 104-05.

¹⁵Elmo R. Richardson, "Was There Politics in the CCC?" Forest History, Vol. XVI (July, 1972): 17.

political activity. In fact, Lancaster had only attended a political rally in Eureka Springs at the behest of Congressional candidate Claude A. Fuller. He did not make a speech, as accused by the department, but simply stated his opinion during the meeting that Fuller could not carry Marion county. Fuller lost the election to Clyde A. Ellis and Lancaster lost his job. The favorable report by McConnell, character references, and excellent work reports proved useless for his defense. Interestingly enough, the man replacing Lancaster, Ralph Woods, was a known Ellis supporter with twelve years of teaching experience to qualify him for a technical job. In contrast, Lancaster's colleagues considered him one of the best supervisors in the district.¹⁶

Politicians tried scraping votes as well as patronage jobs out of the Civilian Conservation Corps. Political aspirants like Congressman Wade Kitchens tried to collect extra support from enrollees by eating meals with them out in the fields and entertaining them with tales of childhood days back on the farm.¹⁷ However, to the disappointment of many politicians, the CCC did not become a seedbed of political activity. Most enrollees concentrated on their work, hobbies, classes, and

¹⁶Thurman W. Lancaster to F.B. McConnell, 19 July 1939; F.B. McConnell to J.J. McEntee, 20 July 1939, Camp Inspection Reports, Roll 5, University of Arkansas Library, Fayetteville.

¹⁷The Banner News (Magnolia), 11 August 1938, p. 1.

recreation while in the camps. Instead of discussing political issues and candidates, they talked about girls, jobs, and sports. The CCC did not discourage enrollee participation in elections so long as they followed state suffrage laws. Still, the atmosphere in the camps was simply not conducive to politics.¹⁸

There was at least one documented attempt by politicians in Arkansas to manipulate enrollee votes. In 1936 enrollee R.E. Smee wrote to a friend that he could possibly swing around eighty uncommitted votes in Camp Cass for any candidate favored by his friend's father, a state Senator.¹⁹ The Senator and his cohorts then used the letter to substantiate rumors that a local candidate, known to be popular among the enrollees, was buying enrollee votes. An investigation by the Director's Office found that the rumors were groundless. Smee's offer amounted to nothing more than a brag that he could influence registered enrollees in the camp to vote for candidates in which they had no particular interest. There was no evidence of vote buying and all the enrollees involved in the case were legally registered voters. The interesting political gambit seeking to have the enrollee votes thrown out

¹⁸Richardson, "Was There Politics in the CCC?" pp. 20-21.

¹⁹R.E. Smee to Armstrong Evans, 21 July 1936, Camp Inspection Reports, Roll 2, U of A Library, Fayetteville.

of the election by the county judge simply failed to develop.²⁰

Racial problems embraced a much greater degree of complexity than those of politics. Out of the 2.5 million young men passing through the Civilian Conservation Corps in a nine-year period, only 200,000 Negroes participated in the enterprise.²¹ The chief reason for such a poor selection ratio was the tremendous pressure placed on the Director by communities refusing to accept black companies. The racial issue boiled over in 1935 when numerous communities in Arkansas, California, and Texas strongly protested the establishment of additional Negro camps in their respective states. Yielding to the pressure, Director Fechner restricted black enrollee selection to vacancies occurring only in existing black camps.²²

The Arkansas District was especially stingy in allowing Negroes into its CCC camps. Eventually complaints from the NAACP forced Frank Persons, CCC representative for the U.S. Labor Department, to threaten Arkansas with the loss of white companies if it did not include more Negroes in its selection quotas.²³ The admonition proved

²⁰J.S. Billups to J.J. McEntee, 10 August 1936, Ibid.

²¹John A. Salmond, "The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Negro," The Negro in Depression and War (Chicago, 1969), pp. 89-90.

²²Ibid., p. 87.

²³Salmond, "The CCC and the Negro," p. 82.

ineffective and discrimination against Negro enrollees remained a major blemish on the record of the CCC in Arkansas as well as the rest of the nation. As late as 1939, for example, the Arkansas District selected only twenty black enrollees out of a total selection quota of 934 for one enrollment period.²⁴ Segregated into companies at Crosset, Strong, Charlotte, Dewitt, and Forrest City, Negro enrollees did not benefit from the Arkansas District's unique "school center" program. But at least classes in the camps helped many black enrollees gain some form of education even in the most difficult of times.²⁵

Segregated camps prevented most racial problems but did not guarantee complete harmony. The most noticeable incidents of racial trouble in the Arkansas District centered in Company 4734 at Forrest City. In July, 1938 black enrollees fought briefly with white workers from the Arkansas Highway Department. Loading trucks in a gravel pit, the two crews began exchanging insults when they encountered one another during water breaks at a nearby well. The foreman in charge of the CCC crew failed to keep the two groups separated and a fight ensued after a considerable escalation period. Racial tension in the camp rose significantly when another white foreman struck

²⁴John Thompson, "Arkansas Public Welfare Review," Vol. 3, No. 3, p. 48, Little Rock, 1937 (Mimeographed).

²⁵Camp inspection report for Company 1798 (Camp Strong), 4 September 1933, Camp Inspection Reports, Roll 3, U of A Library, Fayetteville.

one of the enrollees while questioning him about the fight in the gravel pit. The same foreman had earlier falsely accused an enrollee of taking a coat, causing the enrollee to suffer a brief period of incarceration on the county penal farm.²⁶ The dismissal of the foreman and better control over the work crews returned the camp to a passive condition.

The selection of camp sites for Negro companies posed a significant problem for the CCC. As mentioned above, some communities flatly refused to allow the establishment of colored camps anywhere near them. Such prejudicial attitudes were potentially detrimental to the state in that the CCC did not locate Negro companies near communities registering any kind of protest. If a project could not be found for a proposed black company, the state suffered the loss of one of its 200-man camps.²⁷

The placement problem in Arkansas was mitigated by demographic factors that created a valuable balance of community racial perspectives throughout the state. Towns such as Warren and Hamburg, for example, nearly lost camps for the state due to their adamant racial stands. Plans to replace the white company near Warren with a black company sparked significant protests from the townspeople.

²⁶J.S. Billups to Charles H. Kenlan, 13 July 1933, Camp Inspection Reports, Roll 4, U of A Library, Fayetteville.

²⁷Brigadier General F.E. Uhl to Oren Harris, 8 November 1941, CCC Folder, Oren Harris Papers, University of Arkansas Library, Fayetteville.

Leading citizens made it clear that the community would have nothing to do with a black camp and prevented the proposed transfer. Hamburg actually forfeited its opportunity for a camp, rejecting a proposed Negro company on the grounds that it would be located within the corporate limits of the community.²⁸ It was fortunate for the Arkansas District, then, that some communities actually requested Negro camps because of heavy Negro populations. Charlotte, for instance, requested the company rejected by Hamburg.²⁹

Considering the potential dangers inherent in the political and racial facets of the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Arkansas District skirted the pitfalls with relatively little trouble. The real challenge to community-camp relations came in the first days of the CCC program when people did not understand the Corps or developed erroneous opinions about the men enlisting in it. In some communities enrollees encountered citizens with dour attitudes who considered them nothing more than freeloaders.³⁰ Arkansas CCC officials made special efforts to overcome this public nescience.

²⁸Homer H. Adkins to Senator Hattie Caraway, 8 August 1941; Oren Harris to Duval L. Purkins, 16 August 1941, CCC Folder, Oren Harris Papers, University of Arkansas Library, Fayetteville.

²⁹Batesville Record, 25 July 1935, p. 1.

³⁰Mena Weekly Star, 24 August 1933, p. 4.

CCC camps in the Arkansas District developed some rather interesting public relations programs. Some companies hosted tours through the forests seeking to acquaint communities with recreational facilities developed by the Corps in their area. Company 743, aided by the Forest Service, conducted one such tour through the Sylamore District of the Ozark National Forest. The enrollees guided 150 people in a forty-five car convoy over a seventy-mile route. Midway in the tour, the convoy stopped at a scenic spot and ate box lunches. The Mountain View band entertained the excursioners and H.R. Koen, supervisor of the Ozark National Forest, addressed the group giving them the history of the forest. During the tour CCC enrollees parked cars at scenic stops and changed flat tires, working out of a "trouble shooter" car positioned at the end of the convoy.³¹ Arkansans especially enjoyed CCC forestry festivals. In this program CCC officials selected talented enrollees from the various camps who toured the state promoting community gatherings. The festivals featured contests, games, and entertainment by enrollee performers.³²

CCC companies not only reached out to the public but also invited citizens into the camps. Many camps

³¹Company 743, The Hill Billy (Calico Rock), 14 September 1937, p. 5, CCC Camp Papers, U of A Library, Fayetteville.

³²Company 4732, Jackson Hill Leader (Kingsland), August 1937, p. 4, CCC Camp Papers, U of A Library, Fayetteville.

held open-house sessions on weekends. Quite often groups of farmers involved in soil conservation districts or businessmen from nearby communities ate meals in the camps and attended discussions about relevant conservation or construction projects.³³ Dances attracted citizens into the camps in larger numbers. In view of the fact that dances tended to attract all the local hoodlums, parents developed an appreciation for the modicum of security available at camp gatherings. A few camps gave dances as frequently as every two weeks, supplying the music with their own bands.³⁴

On the other side of the coin, many towns welcomed the enrollees into their community affairs. Mena was especially adept at making enrollees feel wanted. In one event, the town invited enrollees from the Shady and Eagleton camps to its annual Halloween festival where enrollees and townspeople celebrated the festivities on the main street. Young folks from the Mena Catholic Church and the Mena Methodist Girl's Club presented plays in the camps, charging only enough to cover their transportation costs. The University of Arkansas promoted friendly

³³The Banner News (Magnolia), 25 February 1937, p. 1, Ibid.

³⁴Interview with Major General Bruce E. Kendall, Fayetteville, Arkansas, 25 January 1977; Cotter Record, 16 March 1934, p. 1.

relations by inviting some 500 enrollees to the campus and treating them to a football game.³⁵

The Civilian Conservation Corps was quite simply a good program, benefiting the individual as well as the community. Most Arkansans recognized its economic and social values. As one editorial pointed out, the CCC at least took thousands of young men out of a viciously competitive job market if it did nothing else.³⁶ Early apprehensions about having so many young men near communities (and nubile daughters) gradually gave way to an open admiration for the discipline instilled into the enrollees by the Corps. Likewise, fears over political and racial problems proved to be exaggerated. CCC officials actively courted the public by accentuating the innate benefits of the Corps. Their efforts made the CCC an unusually popular federal program.

³⁵Company 747, Eagleton Spoofer (Eagleton), 22 October 1937, p. 6; 22 April 1938, p. 3, CCC Camp Papers, U of A Library, Fayetteville.

³⁶Weekly Tribune (Russellville), 6 April 1933, p. 5.

CONCLUSION

The success of the Civilian Conservation Corps in Arkansas may be measured in three significant ways. As a relief agency it provided purposeful jobs for thousands of Arkansans and pumped millions of dollars into the state's badly depressed economy. In the field of conservation, the Corps reversed years of land abuse, helping to halt the steady destruction of the state's valuable natural resources. As a unique administrative unit, it demonstrated the validity of utilizing existing governmental personnel and agencies in solving complex social and economic problems. This impressive success at the state level was the direct result of certain innate characteristics of the CCC.

Operating with the personnel and facilities of four cooperating executive departments, the Civilian Conservation Corps maintained a remarkably flexible administration. Major policy decisions were hammered out in an advisory council where departmental representatives worked within a fluid alliance system. No department could afford to antagonize another in any great degree. Within the Corps' administrative framework, a department's enemy on one policy issue could easily be a valuable ally in future

debates.¹ The Director coordinated CCC activities while the direct intervention of the President dissolved serious bureaucratic deadlocks. An efficient investigation system prevented the growth of debilitating inefficiency within the 200-man camps at the lowest level of administration and helped to preserve favorable public relations.

The fact that the CCC had to utilize existing governmental resources meant that its officials relied heavily on the cooperation of state governments. State agencies paralleled the role of the Technical Services on state CCC projects, supplying supervisory personnel and project proposals. Since the state possessed a stake in the program, it shared some of the responsibility for its success or failure.

The permanent nature of the Corps' conservation work was very important in its ultimate success. While in the CCC, Arkansans felt that they were working on projects of immense value to their society. They did not merely waste a part of their lives on make-work projects for a survival pittance. A brief listing of some project statistics demonstrates the substantial value of CCC work in the state. Between the years of 1933 and 1942, CCC enrollees built 4,956 bridges and 5,288 miles of truck trails and secondary roads. In reforestation work, enrollees planted 19,463,745 seedlings. The Corps

¹Johnson, "The Role of the Army," p. 92.

contributed 6,205 miles of telephone line, 133 watchtowers, and numerous types of buildings to the state's nascent forest protection system. Besides working on construction and conservation projects, enrollees spent 167,227 man-days fighting forest fires in the state along with a total of 20,900 man-days in emergency work.²

A third major element in the success of the CCC was its emphasis on helping enrollees find themselves in a chaotic world. In the CCC aimless and dejected young men learned how to live with others and accept responsibilities. Enrollees could improve themselves with educational facilities supplied by the Corps. Learning how to build rather than destroy, they gained the benefits of military training without having to commit themselves to years of military service. In many cases, the Corps gave enrollees something to believe in after a period of understandable disillusionment.

An examination of the CCC at the state level reveals a complex administration involving state and federal governments. It demonstrates the principle of federalism at its best with the federal government coming to the aid of a state government without usurping its powers. At the same time, such an examination outlines the immense value of an efficient bureaucracy. More significantly, a review of the CCC at the state level underscores the fact that the Civilian Conservation Corps was simply a very practical idea that worked.

²Records of the CCC, "Summary of CCC Work in Arkansas."

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