

# **A HISTORY OF THE CCC IN ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK**

Julia Brock

2005

INTRODUCTION	2
CHAPTER 1: “WITNESS THE BOY-APPLICANT AND THE BOY- ENROLLEE:” THE CCC AND SOCIAL CONSERVATION	7
CHAPTER 2: THE ENROLLEE EXPERIENCE IN ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK	20
CHAPTER 3: ENROLLEE WORK IN ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK	35
CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS	40
BIBLIOGRAPHY	52
Acknowledgements	58

Report to the Rocky Mountain Nature Association and Rocky Mountain National Park.

## INTRODUCTION

In July of 1942, the *Estes Park Trail* eulogized the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camps in Rocky Mountain National Park – in that year, the last remaining Park camps, NP-11-C in Hollowell Park and NP-12-C near Grand Lake, shut down operations and the CCC left the area permanently. The *Trail* editors noted that CCC contributions to the Park were too extensive to list in detail, but added that, “their work will long live after them in the many miles of trails they built in the wilderness, for the acres of landscaping they carried on to aid Nature healing up old construction scars and to beautify surroundings about Park buildings.” The *Trail* could not have been more accurate in their assessments of the program - the Civilian Conservation Corps did nothing less than propel Rocky Mountain National Park into a new era of tourism and recreation. Their labor not only provided long-needed maintenance for trails, roads, and buildings, it modernized Park facilities and provided new avenues of recreation for the ever-growing tourist population entering the Park. When the program ended in 1942, it was not until several decades later that Rocky Mountain, and all other national parks, had access to resources that matched those allotted in the 1930s.

The CCC was not the only New Deal program that contributed to the Park’s growth during the depression decade. The Public Works Administration (PWA) also provided funds for the Park to contract for labor to build and reconstruct roads and buildings. Similarly, the Civil Works Administration (CWA) briefly employed local men on projects within Park boundaries.<sup>1</sup> But neither of these programs captured national attention and received the ubiquitous popularity in the same way that the CCC did. The program, with its emphasis on exposing young men to rugged camp life and hard work, won the acceptance of many who felt it was an effective way to productively engage unemployed youth. Still today, the Corps remains as one of the most beloved of Franklin D. Roosevelt’s “alphabet soup” of New Deal organizations, particularly with veterans of the program.

The CCC did deliver impressive results – it gave youth from underprivileged families guaranteed nourishment, shelter, and pay for themselves and to help support their families. But it was also a complicated organization with idealistic goals, an occasionally ineffective governing hierarchy, and ambivalent messages for those young men who chose to enlist. For their part, the enrollees reacted to their time in the program differently; many found great value in the CCC but others chose to leave before their enlistment periods were complete. The diverse experiences of administrators and enrollees alike are important when exploring the CCC in Rocky Mountain National Park; it is these experiences that provide the context for the tangible legacy of the Corps in the Park. To attempt to honor the voices of all the human actors who worked to create a better and more accessible recreational space through the Civilian Conservation Corps, this study is divided into three parts: the first chapter is devoted to CCC

---

<sup>1</sup> The CWA operated in the Park in the winter of 1933 – 1934.

administrators and their objectives for the enrollees; the second explores enrollee responses to the program; the third highlights the work that actually took place in Rocky Mountain.

Before examining the CCC in detail, it is important to establish a broad contextual base of the program's origins. Historians have established that the Corps was a personal favorite of Roosevelt's, largely because of his own love of nature and personal history with conservation initiatives. On his Hyde Park estate, for instance, he worked along with foresters to plant trees and practice fire suppression. As a New York senator, he continued experimenting with conservation policy and, along with the state commissioner of forests, established a state department of conservation. Shortly thereafter, while he was U.S. Secretary of the Navy, he accepted a position as the vice president of the New York State Forestry Association. In these offices, he worked closely with leading forestry officials such as Gifford Pinchot, to develop a "scientific" understanding of wise land use. When reelected governor of New York in 1930, he again proved his commitment to conservation ethics by drafting a broad state land policy that had aims similar to later New Deal programs – electrification of rural farms, reforestation, and development of recreational areas.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, other countries and American states had already established conservation work as a means of relief. The most famous example was Germany's Labor Service, directed by Adolph Hitler and criticized by many for its militaristic slant and overt political aims. Roosevelt denied that this program had any influence on the CCC legislation, but, as historian John Salmond notes, "a connection can perhaps be discerned." The Labor Service had origins in the Weimar Republic and was only later co-opted for wholesale political uses. Stateside, the U.S. Forest Service in California and Washington already administered relief camps where men completed forestry projects; the Forest Service directed their work, and state and local authorities took responsibility for workers' clothing and nourishment. Historians also traditionally mention William James when narrating the origins of the CCC. James, a Harvard academician, argued in his treatise, "The Moral Equivalent of War," for a national program that would employ youth on conservation projects. FDR, although a Harvard graduate, denied having read the essay. Still, James' argument maps the basic ideas that underscored later CCC legislation.<sup>3</sup>

The Roosevelt administration also created the CCC in response to the exigencies of the Depression years. The economy was not recovering from the 1929 crash and Roosevelt's 1933 New Deal legislation sought to stabilize the nation's spiraling financial crisis. FDR endeavored to employ the jobless in work that benefited their morale (as opposed to accepting a government handout), and, in the case of the CCC, turn the tide on widespread land misuse. These aims culminated in Roosevelt's Federal Unemployment Relief Act and subsequent Executive Order 6101, which created the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC).<sup>4</sup> Officially known as Emergency Conservation Work (ECW) until 1937, the CCC was an inter-departmental agency that aimed at employing young men ages eighteen to twenty-five, who were single, in good health, and

---

<sup>2</sup> A.L. Riesch Owen, *Conservation Under FDR* (New York: Praeger, 1983), 1-12.

<sup>3</sup> John Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1967), 1-5.

<sup>4</sup> John C Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Park Service, 1933-1942: An Administrative History* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1985),

registered on relief rolls.<sup>5</sup> Although the majority of the roughly 200-man camps were made up of this young contingent, the CCC also created camps for veterans of World War I and Native Americans.<sup>6</sup> The program sought to engage all of these enrollees in conservation projects, ranging from soil conservation initiatives on the midwestern plains to land reclamation in western states and national recreational development.<sup>7</sup> ECW had a separate office headed by Robert Fechner, previously a labor leader, but other federal departments were responsible for its day-to-day operation: the Department of Labor oversaw recruitment of enrollees, the War Department (specifically the Army) administered most aspects of enrollee life in the Corps, and the Departments of Interior and Agriculture managed work projects.

Although final decisions regarding the Corps came directly from Director Fechner and his office, the Army had the enormous task of implementing those directions. In fact, the Roosevelt administration chose the War Department to do this because they already possessed the necessary infrastructure to be effective in this endeavor. The Army oversaw the transportation, sanitation, record keeping, finance, supply, discipline, education, welfare, and camp construction of the CCC.<sup>8</sup> Decentralized governing branches allowed officials to function efficiently; there were nine Corps areas across the United States, each consisting of several districts and subdistricts. Colorado fell into the Eighth Corps area (with headquarters in Ft. Sam Houston, Texas), along with New Mexico, Arizona, Wyoming, Texas, and Oklahoma. Initially, Colorado had only one district with headquarters based in Fort Logan. Later, in 1935, this district was split into two only to combine in 1937 with command centers in Wyoming, forming the Colorado-Wyoming district.

Despite the reorganization of the Army districts in Colorado, camps in Rocky Mountain always fell under the purview of the Fort Logan district (later changed to the Littleton District, although headquarters remained in the same location). From there, a ranking official and his staff issued directives and oversaw the distribution of supplies (food, uniforms, paid allotments) to the commanders of each of the camps in the Park. The district commanders also employed staff to prepare monthly inspections of the camps, which resulted in any necessary actions towards improving camp supplies or personnel. The camp educational officers, chaplains, and cooks, and quartermaster all reported to the Ft. Logan (later Littleton) district. In short, necessary operations of the CCC happened on a locally administered basis, making for a usually effective directorial system.<sup>9</sup>

Administration on a camp level functioned with the same bureaucratic bent. Each camp had its own commander who oversaw reserve officers in various positions. Originally, Army enlistees filled positions under the commander, such as the cook, supply sergeant, mess sergeant, chaplain, doctor, dentist, and educational advisor, but these jobs were later staffed with

---

<sup>5</sup> Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*, 30.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 33-35.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Robert Bruce Parham, "The Civilian Conservation Corps in Colorado, 1933-1942" (master's thesis, University of Colorado, 1981), 18. For a much more nuanced account of federal and state governance of the CCC, see Parham, chapter two.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-22.

civilians.<sup>10</sup> All of these positions were responsible for the basic sustenance, care, and discipline of the enrollees. Officials from the Park Service administered the young men on work projects; each camp had a project superintendent (later called a camp superintendent) and several foremen who accompanied enrollees to worksites. Rocky Mountain superintendents also had access to ECW funds to employ landscape designers and civic engineers. These planners drafted and implemented work projects from the Park's master plan using CCC labor.<sup>11</sup> In addition, Army and Park officials worked in conjunction with administrators from the Colorado State Department of Welfare (under the command of the Department of Labor) to recruit and enroll the young men. For any sort of organizational order, all of these supervisors had to continuously communicate with one another and be familiar with official policies. Ultimately, what seemed like a ham-fisted bureaucratic arrangement was in fact a relatively streamlined chain of command.

Because Colorado natives made up seventy-five percent of the enrollees in their own state camps, it is important to understand the impact of the CCC there. Colorado was similar to many other western states during the Great Depression in that its economy was struggling even before the stock market crash of 1929. As yet unrecognized as a powerful tourist destination, the state depended on industries such as agriculture and manufacturing in the form of wholesale meatpacking and iron production. Both suffered acutely from profit and production losses because of the depression as well as from the paralyzing drought that plagued Colorado and other western states in 1931. In response to the falling economy, Coloradans attempted a number of relatively unsuccessful relief measures, including the establishment of provisional cooperatives throughout the state. By 1932, however, attempts to aid the growing number of unemployed citizens were failing from exhaustion of resources. Agricultural provisions were growing scarce and families were fighting hunger.<sup>12</sup>

Federal programs stepped in to supplant the efforts of state-based relief in 1933, and the citizenry of Colorado welcomed the aid. The gamut of New Deal programs had a presence in the state – the Federal Emergency Relief Act (FERA), the Civil Works Administration (CWA), the National Recovery Administration (NRA), the Public Works Administration (PWA), and the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA), the Works Progress Administration (WPA), and the National Youth Administration (NYA). The CCC was one of the largest and longest of these programs in the state and arguably the most popular. In its nine years, there were a total of 164 camps throughout Colorado, working for Departments of Interior and Agriculture agencies such as the Bureau of Reclamation, the Soil Conservation Service, the Division of Grazing, the Forest Service, and, of course, the National Park Service. Enrollees worked on a variety of projects in conjunction with these agencies. In the drought-stricken plains of eastern Colorado, the Corps mostly worked to turn the tide on the harmful dry land farming techniques adopted by farmers in the early twentieth century. They completed projects to promote soil and water conservation,

---

<sup>10</sup> Civilian employees filled the positions of supply sergeant, cook, and mess sergeant after 1934. The chaplain, doctor, and dentist only worked part-time in an individual camp, as they were usually assigned to districts with many camps.

<sup>11</sup> Parham, "The Civilian Conservation Corps in Colorado," 55-56.

<sup>12</sup> James F. Wickens, *Colorado in the Great Depression* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1979), 1-22; see also Parham, "The Civilian Conservation Corps in Colorado, 1933-1942," 1-11.

such as building check dams and contour ditches.<sup>13</sup> In the western part of the state, camps were mostly located in the national forests, national parks and monuments, and in the state parks system. Their work, broadly, consisted of developing these spaces for increased tourist use. CCC workers also engaged in work projects for the Bureau of Reclamation, such as the massive Colorado-Big Thompson water diversion project. Ultimately, the CCC meant an additional \$56,000,000 for the Coloradan economy; the camps also provided work for much of the state's youth, as well as for older skilled workers who were hired by ECW funds as Local Experienced Men (L.E.Ms).<sup>14</sup> And the Corps invigorated the state's tourist economy, including that of Rocky Mountain National Park, which became a viable economic unit in the 1930s. For Colorado, the CCC was an important tool for public relief.

---

<sup>13</sup> Parham, "The Civilian Conservation Corps in Colorado," 94.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, iii; Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*, 34.

## CHAPTER 1

### “WITNESS THE BOY-APPLICANT AND THE BOY-ENROLLEE:” THE CCC AND SOCIAL CONSERVATION<sup>15</sup>

Beyond acting as a relief measure, the Civilian Conservation Corps had an immediate moral imperative: to corral potentially reckless unemployed boys and transform them into responsible men. With numbers of unemployed youth swelling to more than two million (and recreational “social and civic agencies” closing their doors to the public because of the Depression), many observers began to call for government intervention to target this demographic of young adult males.<sup>16</sup> According to some in the 1930s, leaving jobless youth to fend for themselves created a “menace to society” and, even worse, produced kindling for a revolution.<sup>17</sup> The creators of the CCC had specific methods for what they termed “social conservation,” including exposing the enrollees to natural environments away from the perceived perils of the city, vocational and academic training, and meting out sometimes severe discipline. The camps, and their surrounding landscapes, would thus be spaces of rehabilitation, along with a vital force in Franklin D. Roosevelt’s plan to “conserve our precious natural resources.”<sup>18</sup> Roosevelt and the upper tiers of his administration were successful in spreading the rhetoric of social conservation so that supporters of the CCC spoke of its role in “conserving the social resources of the Nation.”<sup>19</sup> In Rocky Mountain National Park, the responsibility of implementing social conservation fell largely to Army reserve officers who oversaw daily life in the CCC camps.

Reform was, of course, not the only aim of the CCC. Like other New Deal programs, it sought the immediate employment of American citizens to bolster a faltering economy. Many praised it for its real ability to provide basic sustenance – food, clothing, and shelter – to young men from overburdened families. But the Corps also had real objectives of rescuing America’s youth from idleness – goals that mirrored widespread attitudes concerning the Depression and unemployment. The most often cited benefits of the Corps, in fact, were in response to the growth of unemployed and transient youths. This public preoccupation with the welfare and morals of young people was in no way a new phenomenon. Concerns about youth as a distinct age group began in the late nineteenth century as the country experienced increased industrialization and urbanization. Fears grew that the “vice” found in the ever-growing cities would turn groups of young people into gangs of reprobates. Progressive reformers, such as Jane Addams, sought to enact child labor legislation and establish juvenile reform schools to combat

---

<sup>15</sup> Earl Kouns to directors of County Departments of Public Welfare, 29 March 1937, Box 2, Entry 32, “Division of Selection,” “State Procedural Records,” RG 35, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), College Park, Maryland [hereafter cited as state relief records].

<sup>16</sup> This unemployment figure is cited in George P. Rawick, “The New Deal and Youth: The Civilian Conservation Corps, the National Youth Administration, and the American Youth Congress,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1957), 23; Alfred E. Smith, “Unemployed Youth,” *New York Times*, 13 November 1932, p. XX2.

<sup>17</sup> Irene Kleff to Norma Y. Queen, 6 June 1934, state relief records; “Dire Need in Nation Told to Senators,” *New York Times*, 4 February 1933, p. 4.

<sup>18</sup> “The President’s Address,” reprinted in the *New York Times*, 22 March 1933, p. 2.

<sup>19</sup> Lee E. Wilson to Norma Y. Queen, 5 June 1934, state relief records.

to the “problem” of urban youth. National attention again turned to the welfare of the nation’s youth after the economic recession and subsequent unemployment crisis in the early 1920s. Popular youth culture in that decade also led to an outcry against the perceived lasciviousness and aberrant behavior of adolescents and teenagers. President Herbert Hoover, by the end of the twenties, agreed that state intervention was necessary to reform the younger generations and transform them into proponents of American values.<sup>20</sup>

In the 1930s, the Depression left many, including young people and those from rural areas, unemployed. The public was relieved when the government stepped in to counter the “problem” of jobless youth and transients. In a previous effort to employ transients in particular, Colorado and other state relief agencies created unemployment “camps,” but these were largely made up of families and older men.<sup>21</sup> The CCC, on the other hand, focused on recruiting a younger male demographic (ages eighteen to twenty-five), specifically from county relief rolls.<sup>22</sup> At the very heart of social conservation was the objective to gainfully employ these potentially disruptive and “idle” young men. As one Colorado county director said, joblessness “is directly responsible for a large portion of mischief and crime committed by such boys and young men.” According to this relief worker, the CCC camps were wholly effective in combating this perceived problem – they filled “a very urgent need for recreation and employment for them, and the clean healthy lives which they have an opportunity to live, the separation from idle and sometimes vicious associates, has changed their general outlook towards the future.”<sup>23</sup> By removing these young men from “the streets,” many agreed the Corps was providing a community service and a necessary penal function.

Those who espoused support for the Corps praised the ability of the program to turn enrollees into “self reliant and happy citizens.”<sup>24</sup> The Colorado welfare directorate, who oversaw the state’s CCC recruiting operations, was straightforward in acknowledging the objectives of the Corps: “To round the boy out into the man, the man into the citizen, who will recognize his obligations, who will be faithful to his allegiance to the United States, and who in all situations will conduct himself with dignity and restraint.”<sup>25</sup> In the context of the CCC, the term “citizen” had a specific definition: administrators expected the enrollees, because of their class and educational backgrounds, to become cogs in the larger wheel of civic life, achieving political responsibility through their ability to support themselves and their families. In a 1942 educational survey of the CCC, Kenneth Holland and Frank Ernest Hill dubbed this particular role as “conforming citizenship”: the enrollees, after their tenure in camp, would be able to function on a basic level in society and be financially and economically responsible, independent, literate, and have respect for government and authority. This type of citizenship

---

<sup>20</sup> Richard A. Reiman, *The New Deal and American Youth: Ideas and Ideals in a Depression Decade* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 11-26.

<sup>21</sup> Lorena Hickok to Harry Hopkins, 25 June 1934, *One-Third of a Nation: Lorena Hickok Reports on the Great Depression*, eds. Maurine Beasley and Richard Lowitt (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 297.

<sup>22</sup> John A. Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1967), 30. The age and financial requirements eventually grew less stringent as the CCC faced recruitment problems.

<sup>23</sup> Lee E. Wilson to Mrs. Norma Y. Queen, Romeo, Colorado, 5 June 1934, state relief records.

<sup>24</sup> Eldred H. Schaeffer to Norma Y. Queen, 4 June 1934, state relief records.

<sup>25</sup> “Annual Report, 1937,” Colorado State Department of Public Welfare, state relief records.



contrasted with what Holland and Hill referred to as “contributing citizenship,” which called for a strong knowledge of governmental operations, direct political action when necessary, familiarity with current events, and a deep understanding of democratic principles.<sup>26</sup> Ultimately, the enrollees learned that their roles as citizens meant that “individual effort must be embedded in collective and centrally guided action.”<sup>27</sup> CCC administrators, including those in Rocky Mountain National Park, would act as this guiding force to transition enrollees into their new roles as men.

An essential aspect of the Corps as a reformatory program was its focus on outdoor living. The natural environment took on the role of redeemer – Roosevelt assured Congress that by removing the unemployed young men to “healthful surroundings ... we can eliminate to some extent at least the threat that forced idleness brings to spiritual and moral stability.”<sup>28</sup> The relationship between the young men and their surroundings at camp was supposed to work reciprocally: while the enrollees engaged the landscape in conservation efforts, the grandeur of the landscape and the open space would have rehabilitating affects on them. The emphasis on space was particularly important and represented to many in the 1930s the oppositional qualities of a rural life versus an urban one, or the young man’s propensity to submit to a life of crime. Justin Miller, the chairman of the Attorney General’s Advisory Committee on Crime in that decade, reported on the link between young criminals and spaciousness of physical environment: “A typical delinquent history paints a picture of a neighborhood full of corrupting influences and lacking in recreational facilities – often a slum district, where overcrowding, lack of ventilation, and cleanliness are prevalent.” Miller argued that the CCC camps, however, offered “a clean wholesome environment, free from corrupting influences. The outdoor life provides few of the conflicts of a crowded city.”<sup>29</sup> CCC administrators also emphasized a dualism that cast urban life as potentially debasing and pastoral life as virtuous. One county director in Colorado noted how the “newly instilled love of the open air” was repeatedly victorious over the influences of dubious activities in city poolrooms.<sup>30</sup> These state administrators, following the lead of national officials, imbued nature with virtuous qualities and gave it credit for helping to change the young men into responsible adults.

If nature had transformative powers, nowhere would they be more potent than Rocky Mountain National Park, where “high rugged peaks ... primeval forests, scattered groves, and eternal snowfields” surrounded the enrollees.<sup>31</sup> The Park, a roughly 405 square-mile expanse of towering mountains, deep canyons, and expanding glacial parks provided awe-inspiring vistas for all who lived and worked within its boundaries.<sup>32</sup> Lt. William J. Magill, camp commander of

---

<sup>26</sup> Kenneth Holland and Frank Ernest Hill, *Youth in the CCC* (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1942), 222.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 417.

<sup>28</sup> “The President’s Address,” 22 March 1933, p. 2.

<sup>29</sup> Quoted in Robert Fechner, “The Civilian Conservation Corps Program,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 194, “The Prospect for Youth,” (Nov., 1937), 138.

<sup>30</sup> Catherine Alexandre, 7 June 1934, state relief records.

<sup>31</sup> Enos A. Mills, *The Rocky Mountain National Park* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1932), 19.

<sup>32</sup> C.W. Buchholtz, *Rocky Mountain National Park: A History* (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1983), 136. Rocky Mountain National Park began with 358.5 square miles in 1916, but by 1941 the National Park Service had increased the Park’s landmass to 405 square miles.

NP-4 in 1937, explained to parents of enrollees that because the camps were located in the beautiful Park interiors and “away from depression clad cities and communities,” enrollees gained “a new reserve on health,” stronger morals, and the ability to reenter their former communities as capable workers and citizens.<sup>33</sup>

The “camp” setting was particularly important in connecting the young men with their surrounding environments. The enrollees in Rocky Mountain were beyond the nearby towns and villages and nestled in picturesque valleys in the interiors of the Park. Although the camps were equipped with modern amenities, the structures and facilities were very basic and required the enrollees to adapt to a rustic lifestyle. Typical camps included four to five sleeping barracks for the young men, a mess hall, a latrine and bathhouse, hospital quarters, a recreation hall (which, in the case of some Rocky Mountain camps, doubled as an education building), officer’s quarters, administration buildings, a garage, and other service buildings. The makeup and material of the buildings depended on the operation of each camp. For instance, of the six camps in Rocky Mountain, only three were permanent. If the camp was for temporary use in the summers, such as NP-1, NP-3, and NP-7, the barracks and hospital remained as pyramidal tents with wooden support structures. If the Corps inhabited the camps year-round, as in the case of NP-4, NP-11, and NP-12, all buildings were made of wood or, after 1936, were prefabricated.<sup>34</sup>

When constructing the camps, officials were obliged to concede to the topography of the landscape. There were roughly fifty standardized military camp layouts that Army administrators could choose from, but all camps had to conform to the particular terrain of the campsite to ensure stability and minimal visual scarring.<sup>35</sup> Army and Park officials chose locations in the Park based on their planar features and accessibility from roads and trails, but finding such spaces often took several days of scouting. Once they agreed upon a site, Army officers and enrollees constructed the buildings, always mindful of the surrounding contours of the land. Pictures of the camps illustrate that the structures follow directional patterns of the adjacent mountains and moraines; although the camps do not blend in with the scenery, their builders attempted to stitch them into the existing seams of the landscape. In its final form, the CCC camp looked nothing like overcrowded urban street scenes; instead, it was small, organized into simple row or circular patterns, and, of course, beyond the reach of urban traffic, smog, and bustling people.

NP-1-C was the first CCC camp to make an appearance in the Park. In May of 1933, the *Estes Park Trail* reported that after making a nine-mile trek on foot to find an adequate locale, Army and Park officials chose Little Horseshoe Park as the site of the future camp. Nestled in a glen with Big Horn Mountain in the immediate foreground and the Mummy Range stretching out in the distance, one Army captain was not exaggerating when he called the location “the best camp site in Colorado.”<sup>36</sup> On May 10<sup>th</sup>, Army officers and a small group of enrollees from

---

<sup>33</sup> 1st Lt. William J. Magill, “To the Fathers and Mothers,” reprinted in *Texas Tidbits*, 28 January 1937, p. 4.

<sup>34</sup> John A. Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps: A New Deal Case Study* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1967), 136; see also William B. Butler, “The Historic Archeology of Rocky Mountain National Park,” report on file at the Rocky Mountain National Park and Colorado State Historic Preservation Office, Denver, 2005, 4-5.

<sup>35</sup> Butler, “The Historic Archaeology,” 4-5.

<sup>36</sup> “Army Officer Lauds Park Camp Location,” *Estes Park Trail*, 5 May 1933, p.1.

Company 809 arrived to begin constructing the camp, only to be greeted with blinding snow and wind. The squad was forced to quarter in the Utility Area until the weather abated before beginning the assembly of the camp.<sup>37</sup> They eventually constructed NP-1 in two long rows of barracks that saddled against the side of the lateral moraine that separated Little Horseshoe Park from the larger Horseshoe Park. The administrative offices, hospital, mess halls, and officers' quarters were at the head of the two rows and the bathhouse was at the foot, past the barracks.<sup>38</sup> Because the camp was only occupied May through late October, the buildings, except for the mess halls, bathhouse, and administrative offices, were canvas tents with wooden supports. NP-1 remained in Rocky Mountain until November 4, 1939. During that time, men from companies 809, 802, 864, and 865 made their homes in Little Horseshoe Valley.<sup>39</sup>

Camp NP-3, located on the western side of the continental divide, was the second camp to be constructed in the Park. Park superintendent Edmund Rogers reported that the new camp was "on the headwaters of the Colorado River, approximately twelve miles north of Grand Lake."<sup>40</sup> The exact location of the site is never specified beyond that simple description, although Park archaeologist Bill Butler suggested that it was on the Beaver Creek, with tents on both the south and north side of the branch.<sup>41</sup> Because the camp only existed in the summers of 1933 and 1934, most buildings remained as canvas tents. Pictures of Camp NP-3-C illustrate the flexible nature of camp layouts; in one photograph the buildings are clearly arranged in a circular pattern and surrounded by pine. In the center of the buildings was a green, where enrollees of Companies 1809 and 1812, the only two companies to inhabit the camp, likely held their pickup baseball and softball games. CCC officials disbanded NP-3 in October of 1934 and replaced it with NP-7 in the summer of 1935. Although NP-7 was also near Phantom Valley on the western side of the Park, administrators chose a different location for the camp. Like NP-3, the superintendent and CCC administrators never expressly identified the campsite. Company 809 manned NP-7 in the summer of 1935; it was not inhabited again until 1938.<sup>42</sup> In the summer of 1938, Company 847 moved into the camp, but again it was short-lived and the company abandoned the camp that fall.<sup>43</sup> Company 808 last used NP-7 for housing while constructing camp NP-12 in the summer of 1940.

Although Army officers and enrollees initially built Camp NP-4 in May of 1934 with tent barracks, it came to be the first permanent camp in the Park. To accommodate enrollees all year round, officers and young men from Company 864 constructed wooden structures in place of the

---

<sup>37</sup> "Officers and Squad of New Army Arrive," *Estes Park Trail*, 12 May 1933, p. 1.

<sup>38</sup> Lloyd Musselman, *Rocky Mountain National Park: Administrative History, 1915-1965* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1971), 97.

<sup>39</sup> L. A. Gleyre and C. N. Alleger, *History of the Civilian Conservation Corps in Colorado: Littleton District-Grand Junction District, Summer 1936* (Denver: Press of the Western Newspaper Union, 1936), 44, 70; [www.cccalumni.org](http://www.cccalumni.org).

<sup>40</sup> Superintendent's Monthly Report [hereafter cited as SMR], June 1933, Rocky Mountain National Park Historical Collection [hereafter cited as RMNPHC], 1.

<sup>41</sup> Butler, "The Historic Archaeology," 12.

<sup>42</sup> Reasons for such a long absence of enrollees in this camp are unclear, but it was likely due to a congressional shortage of CCC funds.

<sup>43</sup> Butler, "The Historic Archaeology, 12; for a complete listing of Colorado CCC camps and companies, please see the website of the National Association of Civilian Conservation Corps Alumni at <http://www.cccalumni.org/states/colorado1.html>.

tent ones in the autumn of 1934. The camp, which sat in Hollowell Park, was at the bottom of the lateral moraine and directly beside the Rocky Mountain Boys Camp. One observer boasted that, "The setting is excellent for a camp. The site is surrounded by more than fifty mountain peaks that raise their majestic heads above the 12,000-foot elevation mark. Wild life is abundant. Hundreds of deer and elk roam the hills daily. Beaver are common. Trout fishing is good." Company 2552, made up mostly of men from Kentucky, occupied the camp from October 1935 until its later dissolution in 1941.<sup>44</sup>

NP-11 moved into Hollowell Park in 1940 to form a double camp with NP-4, though this setup was not originally planned for the Park. By the late 1930s, however, NP-4 had begun to deteriorate and officials considered razing the camp and installing camp NP-11 in its place. Upon inspecting NP-4, administrators from the Omaha Region of the National Park Service determined that "the replacement of the barracks buildings and the latrine and bathhouse with new structures along with additional repair of the remainder camp buildings would bring this camp up to standard..."<sup>45</sup> After this inspection, it was clear to administrators in the National Park Service and Rocky Mountain that razing NP-4 would be unjustified when it could be rehabilitated at a low cost. They resubmitted a plan to instead create a double camp. Greater manpower, they rationalized, would be necessary for the eastern side of the Park's increasingly ambitious work program. Anticipating that Congress would make the Corps a permanent institution, the Omaha Region official assured Rocky Mountain staff that "repair and rehabilitation of camp NP-4-C can be fitted into the scheme you have in mind for the two camps in such a way that you will have a well laid-out unit that will serve a long range program."<sup>46</sup>

Writers for the *Estes Park Trail* celebrated NP-11 as being a brand new "\$30,000 camp" that would boast sturdy prefabricated buildings. CCC enrollees and officers constructed the camp in November 1939 and, when completed, it was one of the largest camps in the Park. It contained five barracks, a mess hall, bathhouse, recreation building, latrine, administration buildings, officers' quarters, shop, generator house, oil house, infirmary, technical service quarters, foremen quarters, and its own separate educational building.<sup>47</sup> Standing adjacent to NP-4, it was laid out in a similar style to that camp with parallel rows of buildings and a central company street.<sup>48</sup> Company 2822 from Colorado inhabited NP-11 from its beginning until the CCC was phased out in 1942.

Camp NP-12 was the last camp to reside on the western side of the Park. Plans for the camp surfaced in 1939 when Park Service and Bureau of Reclamation officials began to discuss possibilities of creating a recreation area that included the future Shadow Mountain and Granby reservoirs. The two agencies agreed that the Park Service would provide labor to clear the reservoirs in return for extra timber removed from those sites. Some Park and Bureau administrators pushed to build NP-12 in the summer of 1939, but Rocky Mountain superintendent David Canfield felt that to do so without finalization of plans for the recreation

---

<sup>44</sup> Gleyre and Alleger, *History of the Civilian Conservation Corps in Colorado*, 45.

<sup>45</sup> Acting Supervisor of Recreation and Land Planning, Region II, to Superintendent, Rocky Mountain National Park, 18 September 1939, RG 79, E 65, Box 1.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> "CCC Boys Move Into New \$30,000 Camp," *Estes Park Trail*, 10 November 1939, p. 1-2.

<sup>48</sup> Butler, "The Historic Archaeology," 10.

area would be hasty. Instead, he proposed that Camp NP-7 be manned in the summer of 1940 purposefully to build NP-12. In April of 1940, Canfield “received concrete assurances” for the construction of the permanent camp, and he and Bureau of Reclamation officials began scouting an adequate location near Grand Lake. Canfield describes the location as being “on Bureau of Reclamation land above the high-water line of the Shadow Mountain Reservoir.”<sup>49</sup> The only known source to illustrate the location beyond Canfield’s description is a 1941 map that suggests the camp was at the meeting point of the Colorado River and the Shadow Mountain Lake.<sup>50</sup> The camp was large and similar to NP-11 in the type and makeup of the buildings. It was ready for occupation in June of 1940, after Company 808 finished its construction.<sup>51</sup>

Once the camps were established and manned, the Army administrators had full reign and were largely in control of enrollee schedules and discipline, although Park employees oversaw work projects. It was the largely Army officials who implemented the reformatory measures spelled out by social conservation within the larger organized spaces of the camps. They enforced relatively strict work and rest schedules that were constructed in military-style time increments, with emphases on punctuality, cleanliness, and order. The men awoke at six o’clock each weekday to reveille from the camp bugler and immediately made their bed and straightened their barracks, had breakfast at seven, and left for work projects at eight. Work began at nine and stopped at noon for lunch. The workday ended at four when enrollees returned to their camps. Army officials expected the young men to shower before supper at five; after the meal they had a four-hour free period to engage in coursework or recreational activities. The camp shut down for the evening at ten o’clock.<sup>52</sup> Army officers made daily inspections of the barracks as well as kept watch over the appearance of the men at all times. They kept each barrack on a graded point system where individual members determined the overall evaluation of the group. Officials warned enrollees that, “if a man is dirty or does not have on his O.D.’s and tie ... it will count off on his Barracks the next day.”<sup>53</sup>

In keeping with broader ideas of social conservation, administrators at the Rocky Mountain CCC camps encouraged the young men to take advantage of educational opportunities in the camps. Glenn Langley, the educational advisor for NP-4 in the mid-thirties, reminded enrollees that, “Your providing Uncle has foreseen the value to the U.S. of a trained CCC personnel. He has put an educational program in every camp, to give self improvement opportunities to all who desire to benefit themselves.”<sup>54</sup> Camps in Rocky Mountain had educational programs throughout their existence, although they differed in breadth and scope during those years. This lack of uniformity was typical of the CCC educational program in general; academic education for the enrollees was never a high priority of President Roosevelt, CCC director Robert Fechner, or the War Department. Although educational advisors were not enlisted Army men, they fell under the purview of the Army command system and had to operate

---

<sup>49</sup> SMR, March 1940, p. 1-4.

<sup>50</sup> Butler, “The Historic Archaeology,” 15.

<sup>51</sup> SMR, June 1940, p. 3.

<sup>52</sup> Letter from 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. William J. Magill to parents of enrollees, reprinted in *Texas Tidbits*, Company 3884, Camp NP-4-C, 28 January 1937; Leslie Alexander Lacy, *The Soil Soldiers: The Civilian Conservation Corps in the Great Depression* (Radnor, Pennsylvania: Chilton Book Company, 1976), 177.

<sup>53</sup> “Cooperation,” *Texas Tidbits*, Company 3884, Camp NP-4-C, 25 December 1936, p. 4.

<sup>54</sup> *Texas Tidbits*, Company 3884, Camp NP-4, 26 November 1936.

with little funding and oftentimes indifferent attitudes of camp administration. The Army acknowledged the importance of education, but most of its commanders put their weight behind vocational programs that they believed would prove more beneficial to the men who needed jobs after completing their tenure in the CCC.<sup>55</sup>

Despite inadequate source material and occasional indifference from Army officials, the educational advisors worked to create an environment that allowed the enrollees to take advantage of opportunities for personal betterment. At the beginning of an enrollment period (which took place every three months), advisors interviewed all incoming enrollees about their previous education, home and family life, and personal interests and goals. Based on the interviews, the advisor suggested specific courses within the ongoing educational program, or created new ones based on the needs of the men. Advisors, for example, cited illiteracy among enrollees as one of the chief reasons for remedial educational courses. If several enrollees were illiterate or had never finished their elementary education, the advisor created classes for them to learn to read and write or advance beyond the elementary level. These efforts were at times successful, but because the educational programs were voluntary, the results depended on the enrollee. At NP-4 in 1937, for example, the assistant educational advisor created a literacy course only to have “no interest shown by class members.”<sup>56</sup> Some men, however, took advantage of the classes. Advisor Glenn Langley reported in 1936 that one illiterate man had “been trained to where he can write his own letters and read a current events paper of about the fourth grade level, practically without error.”<sup>57</sup>

Because enrollees came from diverse backgrounds of education, family income, and work experience, the educational program had to cater to many different skill levels. Courses normally fell into three categories: academic, recreational, and vocational. Academic classes varied depending on the camp, but elementary classes in English, spelling, and arithmetic were normally present in the camps, as well as the same courses taught on a high school level. Educational advisors also included courses in the social and natural sciences such as zoology, history, and geography. Classes only survived if there was interest and often these difficult classes were poorly attended. Courses that catered more to popular interests were widely attended. Camps, for example, often had a drama club, singing group, or an orchestra. Journalism courses were also in demand, often resulting in camp newspapers printed weekly. Camp NP-1 even enlisted the writers of the *Estes Park Trail* to instruct them in creating a professional newsletter.<sup>58</sup> Instructing was not confined to a designated educational building, often because the camps did not have one. NP-1 and NP-4, for example, had educational offices in their recreation halls. In camp NP-4, classes were also taught in the officers’ mess hall, the

---

<sup>55</sup> Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942*, 50, 162-168.

<sup>56</sup> “Supplement to CCC Ed. Form No. 6,” June 1937, Box 11, “Records of the Branch of Recreation, Land Planning, and State Cooperation,” “Narrative Reports Concerning Abandoned Camps, 1934-1944,” Entry 42, RG 79, NARA II [hereafter cited as narrative reports].

<sup>57</sup> “Notes on July Monthly Camp Educational Report,” July 1936, Box 37, E 115, “Camp Inspection Reports, 1933-1942,” RG 35, NARA II [hereafter cited as inspection reports].

<sup>58</sup> “Round Town,” *Estes Park Trail*, 15 November 1935, p. 4. Outside instructors were not unusual due to the educational advisors’ inability to teach all of the courses.

main mess hall, and the orderly room.<sup>59</sup> For some courses, educational advisers borrowed room and equipment from the YMCA and Estes Park High School.

The majority of courses in all of the Rocky Mountain centered largely on vocational and “on-the-job” training. The educational advisor, Park employees, or Army staff would instruct in courses such as truck driving, auto mechanics, bulldozer operation, concrete construction, carpentry, saw mill operation, cooking and baking, and typing or clerical work.<sup>60</sup> Much of the training occurred on work sites, but some classes were held wherever the camp had designated educational space. At the end of the courses, which normally continued for periods of three months, the enrollees could earn proficiency or unit certificates that signified their “meritorious progress” in a particular skill and ultimately acted as a reference for future jobs.<sup>61</sup>

Educational advisers also conducted classes in civic education, which were often mandatory for the enrollees. In one such instance, the advisor at NP-4 held a forum entitled “Purpose of Our Government” that included several speakers from the camp administration. They lectured on the history of government in the United States, as well as its “purposes and functions.” Under the subject heading “Duties of citizens,” enrollees learned their future responsibilities: “voting, taxes, protect [our] country, develop ourselves, and becoming informed.”<sup>62</sup> These duties were part of the larger goals of social conservation to transform enrollees into “conforming citizens” – men who would contribute to society by supporting themselves and their families, upholding proper “moral conduct,” understanding laws and abiding by them, and generally measuring up “to the minimum qualifications of citizenship.”<sup>63</sup> The educational advisor noted, in the case of the class, that, “The subject chosen was ... somewhat beyond the comprehension of the average of the audience.” Still, classes on government and citizenship continued in the camps because instructing the enrollees in civic awareness, even on a very broad level, was an important part of social conservation.

Beyond the practical aspects of life and education in the camps, officials looked to the environment as an agent of change or, more specifically, as a rite of passage for enrollees to enter into manhood. They imbued the winter season in particular with the ability to harden and mold the young enrollees into men. Winters in the Rocky Mountains could indeed be bitterly cold, windy, and isolating, and camp personnel cautioned the enrollees as the winter months approached. The winter season, company commander Leo Noble warned, meant “the toughening of ourselves a little.”<sup>64</sup> Enrollees would be faced with working in frigid temperatures and severe winds that sounded as if “all the banshees of hell have just sat on a hot tack.”<sup>65</sup>

---

<sup>59</sup> “General Summary Report of the Educational Program, Month of May,” Camp NP-4-C, Company 1812, 7 June 1935, inspection reports.

<sup>60</sup> This list is a sampling of courses taken from various educational reports of all camps. For other classes, see the educational reports attached to camp inspection files in the inspection reports.

<sup>61</sup> “Graduation Exercises,” *The Estes Sentinel*, Company 1812, Camp NP-4-C, 4 April 1935, p. 5.

<sup>62</sup> “Report on Camp Forum,” supplemental report to Camp Inspection Report, NP-4-C, 20 August 1936, inspection reports.

<sup>63</sup> Kenneth Holland and Frank Ernest Hill, *Youth in the CCC* (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1942), 222.

<sup>64</sup> Leo A. Noble, “So This is Winter,” *Long’s Peak Echo*, Company 3884, September 1938, p. 1.

<sup>65</sup> Bob Thorson, “Winter Breezes,” *Long’s Peak Echo*, 28 October 1938, p. 5.

Officials likened the experience to that of early white settlers in the region, noting that enrollees who weathered the winter months developed a “hardy pioneer spirit.”<sup>66</sup> These conditions, they argued, would only work to build character, rugged strength, and increased perseverance – all vital qualities of manhood.

There were consequences for those enrollees who did not cooperate and fit into administrators’ prescribed roles for them in the Corps. The most severe was discharge from the Corps and administrators used it to punish disobedience, recreant attitudes, and to teach a lesson to other enrollees who may have had wayward tendencies. In 1935, for instance, ninety young men struck at Camp NP-4 in defense of camp truck drivers. Rather than compromise with or even acknowledge enrollee demands, camp administration discharged everyone involved.<sup>67</sup> J.C. Roak, a CCC administrator for Army headquarters, was confident that, “the firing of that number of men certainly should make the balance of them set up and take notice.”<sup>68</sup> In another instance, the camp supervisor discharged an enrollee on the grounds that he was distributing communist propaganda.<sup>69</sup> In fact, any potential communist activity was carefully monitored in the camps; monthly inspections forms even included a box for listing such offenses.<sup>70</sup>

Despite working towards the goals of social conservation, CCC administrators in Rocky Mountain did not always single-mindedly push the larger agenda of the reformatory program. And not were all effective leaders - some supervisors were simply inadequate personnel. In one instance, Paul Adkins, camp commander of NP-1 in 1934, was forced to settle debts of 2,200 dollars created by Eugene Birkmeyer, a previous commander. Because Birkmeyer was neglectful of financial responsibilities, NP-1 found difficulty continuing a line of credit with the Army quartermaster or surrounding food and supply vendors.<sup>71</sup> But more often than this kind of indifference, officers showed genuine care for their jobs and for the young men. There was not always an atmosphere of rigidity; officers and enrollees bantered and joked with each other, bonded on work projects or through sports activities, and often genuinely liked one another. Because of these friendships, disciplinary measures were sometimes not as severe as other examples suggest. Battell Loomis, for example, recounted stories of administrators’ lenient attitudes. In the case of five enrollees who refused to work Loomis said, “If the CCC were the army, they would have been clapped in the guardhouse and then given k.p. work.” Instead, the camp supervisor called them to his office, gave each a cigarette, and “put it to each one that they had made a mistake.”<sup>72</sup> Afterwards, the enrollees went back to work without any more reproof.

Although relations were complex between the two groups, Army and Park officials’ use of social conservation rhetoric always mirrored that of state and national CCC administrators. They focused on reforming the enrollees from perceived potential delinquents into mature

---

<sup>66</sup> “All Water Lines in Camp Frozen,” *Texas Tidbits*, Company 3884, Camp NP-4-C, 28 January 1937, p. 7.

<sup>67</sup> “Ninety CCC Men Given Discharge After Strike,” *Estes Park Trail*, 4 October 1935, p.1.

<sup>68</sup> J.C. Roak to George Carlson, 10 October 1935, George Carlson Papers, Western Historical Collection, Denver Public Library, Denver, Colorado.

<sup>69</sup> Headquarters of the Eighth Corps Area, Fort Sam Houston, Texas, to the Adjutant General, War Department, Washington, DC, 16 August 1939, inspection reports.

<sup>70</sup> “Supplementary Report,” Camp NP-1-C, 6 June 1935, inspection reports.

<sup>71</sup> “Findings,” Attached to report dated 6 June 1935, NP-1-C, inspection reports.

<sup>72</sup> Battell Loomis, “The Fight for the Forests,” *Liberty* (20 April 1934), 40-41.



citizens who would take their place in society as hard workers and breadwinners. Officials approached their task with a positive outlook, confident that the camps in Rocky Mountain would live up to the national objectives laid out by Roosevelt and his administration. They failed to express doubt about their own roles in this process, even when faced with high desertion rates and poor morale on the part of the enrollees. In short, they felt successful in implementing the goals of social conservation. The officers in Rocky Mountain repeatedly lectured enrollees about the importance of cooperation and following the rules and guidelines of the camp – lessons that would prepare the young men for lives as responsible citizens. They encouraged the enrollees to suppress their need for “special privileges” and to not consider themselves an “exception.” Instead, they stressed that in a group society, which included the camps, the enrollees should expect to “play the game according to the rules” or “take the consequences.”<sup>73</sup> They also reminded the young men to feel grateful for all that the Corps offered; if not for the Corps, the enrollees would surely be “working for Street and Walker at nothing a day....”<sup>74</sup> Some of the administrators were much more emotional in stressing obedience and gratitude. Camp supervisor D.W. Haggerty suggested enrollees to “thank God we are living and working in the U.S.A.” where “Uncle Sam is and will spend millions on rehabilitation and offering the youth of our country the opportunity to prepare for a life of usefulness and happiness....”<sup>75</sup> Some officials clearly took the rhetoric of social conservation seriously and genuinely attempted to impress it upon the young men.

Although the Army administrators did not often question the social value of the CCC, the citizens of Estes Park certainly did. After 1933 their community, and that of Grand Lake, was teeming with young males – not exactly a comforting thought for many residents. When news of the budding CCC program made the first page of the *Estes Park Trail*, the writer, after describing the 200-man camps, reassured readers by adding that, “The army will construct and maintain the barracks necessary and will police the area as far as the men are concerned.”<sup>76</sup> This reaction was not unusual to the Estes Park area – many communities across the nation suddenly feared for moral fiber of their towns and for their daughters’ safety. In the case of Estes Park, their initial reaction may not have been unfounded – by 1934 the *Trail* editors were already expressing concern that enrollees spent far too much time downtown shouting “remarks about the women on Elkhorn Avenue.” They warned that, “these things CAN be taken care of” through enforced policing.<sup>77</sup> Less than a year later, a group of citizens petitioned the town trustees in order to appoint a night marshal. Although it is unclear if this was a reactionary measure against enrollee misbehavior, it is not difficult to assume that local residents were uneasy about the young men coming into town on their free nights.<sup>78</sup>

An interesting reaction to the “Woodpeckers,” as the CCC men were soon to be known by locals, came from a fictional character created by the *Trail* editorial staff – D. Hy Ridges.

---

<sup>73</sup> “Proofs,” *Long’s Peak Joker*, Company 1812, Camp NP-3-C, 6 August 1934.

<sup>74</sup> *Long’s Peak Joker*, Company 1812, Camp NP-4-C, 26 November 1934.

<sup>75</sup> D.W. Haggerty, “Seventh Anniversary of USCCC is Celebrated Today,” *The Echo*, Company 3884, Camp NP-4-C, 4 April 1940.

<sup>76</sup> “Park Plans for Camp of 200 Men in Vicinity,” *Estes Park Trail*, 21 April 1933, p. 1.

<sup>77</sup> Editorial, *Estes Park Trail*, 6 July 1934, p. 4.

<sup>78</sup> City of Estes Park, Colorado, Public Records, “Minutes of a Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Towns of Estes Park, Larimer County, Colorado,” 8 April 1935.

Ridges' cartoon appearance suggested a salty, cantankerous old-timer, and the writers of the *Trail* gave him a personality to match. Ridges commented on a variety of current events – local and international affairs – and the CCC enrollees did not escape his pontifications. Some of his commentary about the enrollees, such as his suggestion that they confuse tourists by growing long, tangled beards in the summer and pose as “a new type of aboriginals . . . indigenous to Rocky Mountain National Park,” was humorously absurd.<sup>79</sup> But Ridges' also acted as a mouthpiece for ambivalent attitudes towards the experimental program when he expressed doubt in the young men's ability to manage themselves in “the forest primeval” or when he chided the camps for being recipients of government favoritism.<sup>80</sup> This attitude no doubt mirrored those of locals who were unsure of the program and still wary of large-scale government intervention and public relief.

The CCC immediately showed its value in the community by employing local experienced men (LEMs) to soak up some of the locally unemployed. By 1933, the Depression had taken its toll on Estes Park; Superintendent Rogers reported in May of that year that, “The labor situation in the community is still serious.” He added, however, “Local married men will be given the opportunity to enlist in the Emergency Conservation Army.”<sup>81</sup> The older men employed as LEMS did not have to meet the same requirements as the younger men, were often paid higher salaries, and acted as “overhead workers,” which meant they worked in supervisory roles and performed skilled work such as carpentry and forestry jobs.<sup>82</sup> Rogers noted that the local men were not “enthusiastic” about the prospect of working for the nascent program, local relief officials and even the *Trail* writers urged men to take advantage of these positions. The Park Service normally employed these skilled workers in the summers, but because of curtailed funds those Park positions were scarce. Working as an LEM was often the only option to defeat unemployment.

The CCC also represented capital to the two gateway towns of Estes Park and Grand Lake, not only in the money that enrollees spent at arcades, taverns, and movies, but also in Corps work programs to develop the National Park. The interests of the villages and of the Park were so intertwined that to open the Park to increasing tourism meant a boost for the local economies. Estes Park and Grand Lake, therefore, had plenty of reason to celebrate and aid the CCC program. Groups such as the Woman's Club of Grand Lake and individual members of the community rallied and held donation drives to gather recreational equipment for the enrollees, which were always successful. The Rotary Club, the American Legion, the Chamber of Commerce, and other civic organizations also held dinners and dances in honor of the Corps. When the CCC first arrived in Estes Park, for instance, the chamber of commerce held a barbecue and provided music, dancing, and wrestling and boxing matches for entertainment.<sup>83</sup>

---

<sup>79</sup> “Hy Ridges Suggest a Plan for ‘Woodpeckers,’” *Estes Park Trail*, 12 May 1933, p. 6.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*; “Hy Ridges Says CCC Campers are Pampered,” *Estes Park Trail*, 26 May 1933, p. 6.

<sup>81</sup> SMR, May 1933, p. 3.

<sup>82</sup> “Region Will Supply ‘Overhead’ Personnel in Reforestation Work,” *Estes Park Trail*, 5 May 1933, p. 1; Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*, 35.

<sup>83</sup> “Chamber of Commerce Sponsors Show Here for Woodpecker Camp,” *Estes Park Trail*, 19 May 1933, p. 8.

The largest community event for the CCC was the annual anniversary celebration held at the permanent camps, normally in April. These open-house events were always well attended by the local public and offered a variety of entertainment. In 1938, at the fifth anniversary gathering at NP-4, the day began with visits to various workstations where enrollees exhibited their craftsmanship and skill at carpentry, beetle eradication work, tree planting, and other jobs. In the evening visitors and CCC enrollees would relax with dinner followed by a movie and then a night filled with swing bands and dancing. The *Trail* reported that the fifth anniversary festivities were a huge success and the enrollees played host to 250 Estes Park citizens and “visitors from valley towns.” A number of dignitaries, officials, and newspaper publishers were present at the evening party, where they feasted on a “southern dinner” and then promptly “discarded any remaining dignity to join in the dancing in the new recreation hall.”<sup>84</sup> The *Trail* writers lauded the enrollees and the Corps staff for hosting a lively and impressive anniversary party.

Besides D. Hy Ridges, in fact, *Trail* writers were largely positive about the CCC and continuously updated the community with descriptions and activities of the enrollees. They repeatedly encouraged the general public to visit the campsites and take interest in the young men.<sup>85</sup> The *Trail* constantly reported the results of enrollee baseball, softball, and basketball games and tournaments from camps on both sides of the Park. Moreover, in its annual visitors’ guide to the area, the newspaper featured an article that described a litany of reasons that the Corps was invaluable to the Park and Estes Park and Grand Lake. *Trail* writers dedicated several columns to explaining work programs and took care to list statistics from job reports, noting the bottom line was always to the Park’s advantage. And though listing these tangible gains from the CCC presence in the area, the writers also took care to name the psychic benefit that the Corps was having on its enrollees – putting downtrodden, restless youth in a wholesome environment and training them for future careers. In 1940, one writer put it bluntly: “In addition, tomorrow’s men evolve from today’s enrollees, who would have been denied opportunity of self-development if the CCC had not been available to teach them the fundamentals of skilled trades on the job.”<sup>86</sup> All, it seemed, generally believed in the importance of social conservation and its impact on youth. But how did enrollee expectations and reactions measure up to their administrators’ hopes for them? Chapter two will focus on capturing the experiences of the young men who, for a time, called Rocky Mountain their home.

---

<sup>84</sup> “CCC Camp Host 250 Guests at Celebration,” *Estes Park Trail*, 8 April 1938, p. 1.

<sup>85</sup> See, for example, “Reforestation Army Men Will Lead Ideal Existence Here,” *Estes Park Trail*, 19 May 1933, p.

6.

<sup>86</sup> “Local CCC Camps Were the First in the West,” *Estes Park Trail*, 26 April 1940, p. 20.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE ENROLLEE EXPERIENCE IN ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK

Although CCC administration had goals for the young men going through its ranks, the enrollees in the Rocky Mountain National Park camps responded differently to the regimented nature of their lives and work in the CCC. Some felt grateful for the opportunity of stable work and a resulting paycheck and thus lived peacefully in accordance with administrator demands. Even so, some men did not feel indebted to the Corps, particularly the enrollees who encountered racism, inadequate living accommodations, indifferent supervisors, and unfair treatment. These young men reacted in a myriad of ways – some deserted, some acted out and were discharged, others decided to remain and collect their monthly pay. Enrollees did speak out against what they perceived to be mistreatment; the young men in the Park very often relied on protest as a form of voicing dissatisfaction to Army and Park supervisors. Enrollees also expressed their grievances by writing to their camp newsletters. These individuals were not passively obedient in response to Army and Park Service discipline and work schedules – they chose to accept the conditions of the Corps or not.

This chapter uses camp newsletters to explore the multitudinous ways that enrollees responded to their surroundings – the Park and Army administration, their fellow campmates, and the mountainous environment that encircled them. The newsletters, published by enrollees with the aid of camp administration, also highlight issues of gender, race, and class-consciousness. For the most part, the young men held stock in existing social norms, and the camps were colored with prejudice and conflict. On the other hand, the papers clearly show that the CCC served as an important bonding experience for these young adults who were often far from home. Whatever their experiences, enrollees clearly had their own agendas that often collided with that of their administrators'. Overall, the Corps was a valuable experience for most of the young men, who, after leaving the program, had enough experience to obtain jobs in the working world.

The camp newspapers provide insight into the enrollees' experiences, but with some limitations. The Army continuously censored the newsletters and undoubtedly shelved strong opinions critiquing the camps and administration. The enrollees were aware of the censorship, and consequently their contributions to the papers were sometimes scarce. In several additions, editors implored other camp members to submit stories, poems, jokes, and even opinions, assuring the men that if their complaints were reasonable, they would be published. With only a small percentage of the camp roster contributing material for the newsletters, the papers were in the hands of a few contributing editors from enrollee ranks and Park and Army staff. Although the articles by administrators are telling and do provide glimpses of enrollee experiences, they are largely focused on emphasizing the perceived values of the social conservation. Furthermore, the surviving newsletters are not equally representative of all of the camps within Park boundaries. A majority of the surviving issues are from newsletters published by Camp NP-4, a permanent camp that had the longest tenure in the Park. The resulting evidence largely accounts for the experiences of enrollees who lived on the eastern side of the Park near the outlying village of Estes Park. There are few papers from camps NP-3, NP-7, and NP-12, which were closest to the small town of Grand Lake on the western part of the continental divide.

Still, the newsletters served as valuable outlets for enrollee reactions to their surroundings and are substantial enough in number to illustrate a wide array of enrollee experiences. As one young editor noted, “it is the only medium through which the majority may voice its opinion.”<sup>87</sup> And despite censorship, some editions managed to include startling critiques of the program and administration, even if only in underhanded implication, as well as highlight a larger self-consciousness on the part of enrollees’ regarding their own work and lives in the Park. From the various articles, joke columns, and sports pages, larger themes of enrollee interpersonal relationships, recreational and educational pursuits, and conceptions of the natural environment come to the surface.

Before he began life in the CCC, a young man had to first make the decision to enroll. As expected, the young men joined the Corps to improve or stabilize their own and their families’ financial position. They enrolled for other reasons, as well – many to acquire vocational training, educational instruction, and a chance to see other parts of the country. But the larger shared objective was to earn money. The men saw the CCC as a way to acquire secured employment and income, even if it meant working under the government’s stipulations. With the depressed economy and one out of every four young men out of work, it is hardly surprising that the CCC seemed like a promising solution.<sup>88</sup>

A potential enrollee first had to be between the ages of seventeen and twenty-three, unmarried, willing to allot most of his monthly pay to a family member, and, until 1937, registered on relief rolls.<sup>89</sup> He would then complete an application from his county relief office, answering questions regarding his physical person, work history, family life, and his father’s occupation. After the paperwork was complete, the county relief director interviewed the potential enrollee and took time to stress the lifestyle change that the Corps would bring with its regimented schedules, mandatory uniforms, and expected acquiescence to Army discipline.<sup>90</sup> The county relief director then scrutinized the young man’s reaction to this information and his application answers and determined the young man’s need for the Corps, as well as his perceived ability to adapt to camp life. If the relief officer selected the young man, he had to then successfully pass a physical examination, where he could be rejected for having “radical physical disabilities” (a phrase subject to interpretation) or not being “physically fit to do an ordinary’s day work.”<sup>91</sup> If the examiners determined him physically able, he took an oath of enrollment and was inducted into the CCC. The relief director then assigned the enrollee to a Corps company and campsite.

---

<sup>87</sup> *Long’s Peak Views*, Company 1812, Camp NP-4-C, 19 September 1935, p. 2.

<sup>88</sup> John Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1967), 3.

<sup>89</sup> Kenneth Holland and Frank Ernest Hill, *Youth in the CCC* (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1942), 41-42; Earl M. Kouns to Directors of County Departments of Public Welfare of Colorado, 7 December 1936, Box 2, Entry 32, “State Procedural Records,” RG 35, NARA II, College Park, Maryland [hereafter cited as state relief records]. In 1937, administration extended acceptance into the Corps to young men who were not on relief rolls but in need of financial assistance.

<sup>90</sup> Robert Bruce Parham, “The Civilian Conservation Corps in Colorado, 1933-1942,” (master’s thesis, University of Colorado, 1981), 36-37.

<sup>91</sup> “Manual for Selecting Enrollees,” Colorado State Department of Public Welfare, 1 June 1939, p. 52, state relief records.

Young men assigned to Rocky Mountain often went to an introductory training site before traveling to their ultimate camp destination. When they arrived in the Park, Army and Park supervisors greeted the enrollees and the camp commander normally conducted an orientation welcoming the new men and explaining the rules and guidelines of camp life. Enrollees next collected their commissioned items: “two pairs of shoes, three pairs of pants, two shirts, three changes of underwear, two jackets, overcoat caps, towels, toilet articles, blankets, sheets, cot, mattress, mess equipment, etc.” They then went through a series of inoculations for typhoid fever and smallpox.<sup>92</sup> Often, after going through the necessary induction procedures, companies would work together to personalize their campsite; they might landscape the walkways, decorate the recreation halls, or paint the barracks buildings with kalsomine.

Once settled into their camps, enrollees had to adjust to their regimented lives as wards of the Army. Some young men adapted to this type of strict schedule, but many understandably resented it. One enrollee from NP-4 described the early morning scene:

6:00 a.m. Out of the still silent morning comes the shrill blast of the whistle. .... What! Again? ... turns over and tucks in covers. But remembers that little book and pencil the top kick carries around with him on his morning tour through the Barracks – and comes a vision of all those pots and pans up in the kitchen....

Another young man joked that, “having to be whistled at for everything makes dogs of us all.”<sup>93</sup> It was difficult for any enrollee to avoid adherence to the Army’s schedule and administrators warned them that, “if you break a rule you can expect to take the consequences.”<sup>94</sup> “The consequences” often meant an administrative discharge, which disqualified the young man from reenlistment in the CCC as well as any future government position. A few enrollees ultimately decided to abandon the camp even before their life in the Corps had begun. Many left only after a few weeks because of homesickness, something administrators tried to avoid by immediately starting the young men on Park work projects. Still, desertion was a common problem, and not only in Rocky Mountain; national statistics reported that as many as one out of five enrollees deserted until 1941, when the CCC began to curtail its operations because of the impending war.<sup>95</sup>

Once they began, Park work programs became the focal point of camp life and consumed much of the enrollees’ waking hours. Although enrollees worked with heavy equipment, much of the labor was never extremely demanding. Because of this, Battell Loomis, a hired worker at camp NP-4, observed that the enrollees didn’t “break their hearts over this time-clock business.” Instead, after finishing their work with little difficulty and time to spare, the men might begin an impromptu baseball game or track meet at a worksite.<sup>96</sup> Of course, the work did have value for many of the enrollees; often their work experience in the CCC led to jobs in the outside world. Monroe Smith, an enrollee at Camp NP-4, eventually used his experience stringing telephone

---

<sup>92</sup> “Annual Report, 1937,” Colorado State Department of Public Welfare, p. 39, state relief records.

<sup>93</sup> “Whistle!” *The Four and One Times*, Camps NP-4 and NP-1, 4 August 1934.

<sup>94</sup> “Proofs,” *Long’s Peak Joker*, Company 1812, Camp NP-3-C, 6 August 1934.

<sup>95</sup> George P. Rawick, “New Deal and Youth: The Civilian Conservation Corps, the National Youth Administration, and the American Youth Congress,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1957), 133.

<sup>96</sup> Battell Loomis, “The Fight For the Forests,” *Liberty* (20 April 1934), 40.

lines in the Park to obtain employment with Mountain Bell in Colorado.<sup>97</sup> Dean McMurphy, another Rocky Mountain CCC, noted that this trend was widespread: “A lot the boys used the skills they learned ... for the rest of their lives – it was the first step on the road to a career.”<sup>98</sup> The *Trail* also reported of enrollees that successfully found employment; in a period of six months in 1936, for example, fifty young men found outside positions from “laborer to supervisor” because of their CCC experience.<sup>99</sup> Furthermore, the young men often connected with their work in meaningful ways. McMurphy took pride in remembering the “darn good” table and bench combinations that his crew built for campground use. Smith compared the productivity of his work in the Park with previous fourteen-hour days on a cotton farm “with nothing to show for your work.”<sup>100</sup>

Other enrollees, however, thought that administrator’s expectations of their workloads were too extreme. A cartoon in the camp newsletter *Long’s Peak Joker* depicts an angry official with a spiked club hovering over an enrollee who is obviously laboring to pick weeds. A bird in a nearby tree remarks: “And on Saturday to [sic]. My my.”<sup>101</sup> Enrollees understood the power of collective action and vocalized their grievances if they felt unfairly treated by administration on the job. An extreme example of this occurred in 1935 when ninety men from NP-4 struck. They protested against what they thought to be mistreatment on the part of CCC administrators who were commanding truck drivers to engage in manual labor when not driving. Negotiations between all groups failed and the Army discharged the drivers. This action exacerbated tensions and the group of strikers marched to the home of camp superintendent George Carlson, where they stood outside and challenged him to present himself. The situation calmed only when Army officers arrived to escort Carlson away from the angry group of enrollees. In this case, the Army issued discharges to all of the enrollees who participated.<sup>102</sup>

The young men were more successful when they revolted against aspects of camp life that did not disrupt work programs. Opinion about mess food differed, but unsatisfactory conditions caused enrollees to challenge their Army officers. By most accounts, the food was normally well-balanced; a sample menu from NP-1 listed stewed prunes, fried eggs, oatmeal, bread, butter, milk, and coffee for breakfast; mashed potatoes, Boston baked beans, cream tomato soup, buttered hominy, bread, butter, fresh radishes, iced tea, and bread pudding for lunch; and salmon loaf, creamed potatoes, spinach, fried saurkraut and sliced bacon, bread, butter, and coffee for supper.<sup>103</sup> Still, camp newsletters are virtually filled with complaints about untrained cooks and dubious culinary practices. One naysayer railed against the food at camp

---

<sup>97</sup> Jackie Hutchins, “Passage of 44 Years Doesn’t Diminish Fond Memories of Park’s CCC Alumni,” *Estes Park Trail*, 13 September 1985, p. 13.

<sup>98</sup> Dan Campbell, “Low Pay and Hard Work Remain as Golden Memories for CCCers,” *Estes Park Trail*, 2 September 1987, p. 7.

<sup>99</sup> “CCC Boys Obtain Work In Private Employment,” *Estes Park Trail*, 23 October 1936, p. 5.

<sup>100</sup> Dan Campbell, “Low Pay and Hard Work,” 7.

<sup>101</sup> *Long’s Peak Joker*, 20 December 1934.

<sup>102</sup> Musselman, Lloyd K., *Rocky Mountain National Park, Administrative History, 1915-1965* (Washington D.C.: Office of History and Historic Architecture, 1971), 103; “Ninety CCC Men Given Discharge After Strike,” *Estes Park Trail*, 4 October 1935, p.1.

<sup>103</sup> “Menu,” attached to a report dated 6 June 1935, NP-1-C, Box 37, E 115, “Camp Inspection Reports, 1933-1942,” RG 35, NARA II [hereafter cited as inspection reports].

NP-1C, particularly expressing his repugnance of having “scrambled pre-mature baby chicks” as daily breakfast.<sup>104</sup> John Finn, an enrollee from NP-1, took direct action in response to a food quandary by petitioning his campmates and writing a letter to Robert Fechner, the director of the CCC. In his letter to Fechner, Finn reported that “the food condition” in NP-1 was “deplorable.” According to Finn, the mess steward was inexperienced and the food quantity was appallingly scarce. He included the signatures of the rest of the camp to attest to the gravity of the problem.<sup>105</sup> Finn’s letter got the attention of the camp officials who quickly made moves to remedy the situation. The Army ultimately discharged Finn, however, on the grounds that he was distributing communist literature and trying to encourage the enrollees to strike “in order to disrupt morale and discipline.”<sup>106</sup> Although they did give way in the face of enrollee demands, officials made an example of Finn to make clear the consequences of large-scale organization in the Corps. This example also illustrates that Army reserve officers, who filled the majority of camp supervisory positions, culled any enrollee who held perceived aberrant beliefs.

To carry out the aims of social conservation, CCC administrators provided for an educational program that focused on vocational classes and hands-on experience. Although an educational director was assigned to each camp to supervise the program, Park technical officials often oversaw the vocational curriculum.<sup>107</sup> Enrollees saw merit in such a program; these courses were popular with the young men who sought to improve their lot. At NP-4 in 1936, for instance, 130 men enrolled in vocational and job training courses, compared to three who enrolled in academic subjects.<sup>108</sup> This trend reflects a desire to be employed outside of the CCC, but it also illustrates enrollee class-consciousness. J.D. Russel, an enrollee at camp NP-4 in 1935, told fellow campmates that although “Most of us are unskilled laborers ... some of us will be successful.” He encouraged others to take advantage of the camp educational program for this reason.<sup>109</sup> Enrollees may have agreed with many CCC administrators who believed that vocational work would be the most practical way of providing “a training that will insure a greater degree of employability....”<sup>110</sup>

Academic courses, however unpopular, were normally available in the camps and enrollees who already had some high school or college education could also advance to higher academic levels. Educational programs at the Rocky Mountain camps often included high school coursework in English or literature and mathematics. Men could also take night classes at the local high schools and complete correspondent coursework with various universities. In 1938, for instance, enrollees at NP-4 had the opportunity to take college courses and gain credit from the University of Oklahoma.<sup>111</sup> Completed coursework or high school grade advancement

---

<sup>104</sup> “Ailing Eggs,” *The Four and One Times*, 4 August 1934, p. 2.

<sup>105</sup> John Finn to Robert Fechner, NP-1-C, 14 July 1939, inspection reports.

<sup>106</sup> Headquarters of the Eighth Corps Area, Fort Sam Houston, Texas, to the Adjutant General, War Department, Washington, DC, 16 August 1939, inspection reports.

<sup>107</sup> John C. Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Park Service, 1933-1942: An Administrative History* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1985), 83-86.

<sup>108</sup> Monthly Supplementary Educational Report, July 1936, Company 2552, NP-4-C, inspection reports.

<sup>109</sup> “To Day,” *The Estes Sentinel*, 4 April 1935, p. 2.

<sup>110</sup> Quote from E.H. Menke reprinted in the Colorado State Department of Public Welfare, Annual Report, 1937, p. 40, state relief records.

<sup>111</sup> “Educational Work,” included in Camp Inspection Report, 18 April 1938, inspection reports.



resulted in school credit and often the local county school superintendent issued certificates of achievement to enrollees who graduated from a course.<sup>112</sup> To honor those men who did successfully complete a course, the camps conducted graduation ceremonies along with a public notice of their achievements in the *Trail*.<sup>113</sup>

Like-minded enrollees connected through classroom and leisure activities. Enrollees had the ability to create classes based on interest; there was often a drama or orchestra group, for example, and enrollees often staged their own plays and variety shows in camp. The men also interacted with members of the community. On weekends, the Park Service provided trucks to take the men into town for movies and dances in Estes Park or Grand Lake. Enrollees also held free dances in their recreation halls to entice the attendance of the local young women, who were not normally allowed in the camps. The local YMCA and high school in Estes Park were popular venues for holding enrollee plays and variety shows. Enrollees would often compete in talent shows to show off their musical or dramatic abilities; in 1936, for example, Fritz Cerne of NP-1 won first prize at an amateur talent contest at the high school for his zither solo.<sup>114</sup>

Sports and recreation were mainstays of the enrollees' lives. Camp greens for baseball and softball were always a high priority when constructing the campsites and each camp was equipped with a recreational hall for indoor activities and games. The enrollees always had access to a variety of sports gear; an inventory of Company 864's recreation equipment listed these items: basketballs, volleyballs, indoor bats, baseball uniforms, baseball gloves, horseshoe sets, tennis nets, sports shoes, tennis rackets, sports balls, a ping pong set, checkers, boxing gloves, cribbage board, picture puzzles, and writing tables.<sup>115</sup> The young men also created sports teams to compete with groups from other CCC camps, local citizens, and high school teams. In the summers, baseball and softball games between enrollees and Park employees were publicized for public attendance in the *Trail* calendar of events.

Leisure time was critical for enrollees to escape the watchful eyes of administration and decompress from camp schedules. It was so important to them, in fact, that they aggressively challenged any restraint on their free time. In one such incident in 1934, Army officials momentarily halted trucks from carrying enrollees into Estes Park on the weekend. The young men met to protest the decision, but their actions were "not conducted in an orderly manner" and four of the enrollees were discharged. The enrollee who reported the incident in the camp newsletter *The Four and One Times* noted that, "it is not anything but fair that the men should be allowed to go to town on week-ends after working hard all week." He added, however, that protesting must be efficiently organized and communicated to administrators to be effective.<sup>116</sup> Although protesting could be a valuable tool for enrollees to demand redress, Army officers never let their own authority be compromised by enrollee organization. In this case, however,

---

<sup>112</sup> Colorado State Department of Public Welfare, Annual Report, 1937, state relief records.

<sup>113</sup> See, for example, Edith Caswell, "Camp Holds Graduation," *The Mountaineer* (published by the Estes Park High School) no. 24, 3 April 1936, p. 1.

<sup>114</sup> "Community Players Top Off Successful Year With Final Program Wednesday," *Estes Park Trail*, 20 May 1936, p. 2.

<sup>115</sup> "C.C.C. Company 864, Camp NP-1-C, Estes Park Colorado," 6 December 1934, inspection reports.

<sup>116</sup> "NP-4-C Enrollees Hold Mass Meeting," *The Four and One Times*, 18 August 1934, p.1.

the newsletters aided the young men; the Army again provided trucks soon after complaints surfaced in written form.

Through the various tribulations of camp life and work, the young men undoubtedly found comfort in their fellow campmates. Enrollee relationships were a vital part of CCC experiences; they became strong support networks in the absence of immediate familial ties and provided outlets for grievances of hard work, strict Army and Park administrators, poor mess quality, and inadequate living accommodations. One NP-11-C enrollee expressed this sentiment in a poem:

When to this camp we all came as friendly as a bunch of brothers/  
We ate together, worked together yet we hardly knew each other. We played together in masses/  
We slept together, joked together, together we attended many classes. When one of us was  
stricken with grief, we'd turn to the others/  
We were brothers. He'd help me and I'd help him.<sup>117</sup>

Through jokes, tales of pranks, and poems like this one, the newsletters reflect that relationships with campmates were defining features of the enrollees' experiences in the Park.

Not all relationships between the men were positive, however. Although the administration touted objectives of cultivating a greater tolerance in the young men, pervading racial attitudes permeated camp relationships. Unlike camps in other parts of the country that were strictly separated along color lines, CCC camps in Colorado were not officially segregated. This was a common practice, as historian Olen Cole notes, in western and northern states that did not have a large enough African-American population to create segregated camps.<sup>118</sup> In the Park, blacks were listed as enrollees only in 1934 and 1935, and these were few in number. Still, black enrollees had a strong presence during these years, particularly in camp NP-4-C. In 1934, eight young black men staged their own minstrel act at the YMCA center in Estes Park, entertaining crowds by capitalizing on a form of parody normally performed by whites.<sup>119</sup> The performers gained recognition in the camp for their comedic and theatrical skills. Another black enrollee used the *Estes Park Trail* as a medium to gain respect by challenging any willing person to a boxing match. Claiming that he was a better fighter than Joe Lewis, Adam Glass attracted the attention of the *Trail* editor, who depicted Glass as having "a heart full of the desire to fight."<sup>120</sup>

Despite the respect that some black enrollees inspired in their fellow enrollees and the surrounding community, racial discrimination was part of camp life. Attitudes towards blacks in general reflected belief in and ridicule of stereotypes of black culture. The newsletters are filled with racist jokes depicting blacks as backward and ignorant, as well as reporting the news of whole troupes of young men devoted to performing "vodvil [sic] and minstrel" acts that centered

---

<sup>117</sup> *The Bay State Sentinel*, Company 2138, Camp NP-11-C, 21 March 1940.

<sup>118</sup> Olen Cole, *The African-American Experience in the Civilian Conservation Corps* (Gainesville: The University Press of Florida, 1999), 20; Parham, "The Civilian Conservation Corps in Colorado," 143.

<sup>119</sup> "NP-4-C Colored Boys Working Overtime Preparing Minstrel," *The Four and One Times*, Camps NP-1-C and NP-4-C, 4 August 1934, p. 1.

<sup>120</sup> "Giant Negro Fighter, 'Better than Louis,' Seeks Opponent," *Estes Park Trail*, 2 August 1935, p. 2.

on mocking African-American cultural lifeways. And black enrollees were not the only targets. White enrollees hurled slurs at men whose skin was any shade darker than theirs. An anonymous writer in NP-11 explains that, “We wondered why the ‘nigger’ section was so named with a man (?) called White in it. But one look at Zepeto, Instaci, Chiara and Maniatagos soon explained the fitness of that name.”<sup>121</sup>

Because they made up a large part of CCC enrollees in the state, Spanish-Americans and Mexican immigrants had to withstand racist attitudes from peers, administrators, and the surrounding communities. Chicano men were never officially segregated from white groups.<sup>122</sup> Hostile attitudes towards Chicanos resulted in de facto segregation throughout the state, and this discrimination permeated CCC camps.<sup>123</sup> In some instances, as in the case of Rio Grande County, Colorado, the community balked at the “large majority of Mexicans” (whites normally made no distinction between immigrants and those Chicanos who were native-born) in the nearby camps. CCC state administrators pacified members of the community by segregating the living quarters of the enrollees.

No similar complaints were publicly made in Estes Park or Grand Lake about Chicano enrollees in Rocky Mountain and it is unclear if barracks were segregated. The camp newsletters, however, convey that Spanish-speaking men did have to contend with pervasive racism, not only from white administrators and campmates, but also from other Chicano enrollees. Identifying as “Spaniards,” some men delineated between their culture and that of Mexican immigrants based on ancestry and American citizenship. One enrollee wrote to *The Four and One Times* expressing disgust that he and other Spanish-Americans were being treated like Mexican workers. He claimed that, “We are not Mexicans. Let me tell you If you don’t know or do not understand by Nationality, we are Spaniards and by birth we are ‘American born citizens’ therefore we are Americans and nothing else....” According to this enrollee, Mexican immigrants differed because they refused to be citizens, instead preferring to remain as “Dogs or Hogs from Old Mexico....”<sup>124</sup> This attitude was common in Spanish-American communities throughout Colorado, particularly in the northern part of the state; here the white-controlled, exploitive sugar-beet industry pitted migrant and native Chicanos against each other to compete for wage labor on the farms.<sup>125</sup>

Although Spanish-American men faced discrimination in Rocky Mountain, enrollees from Mexican immigrant families arguably fared worse. Their treatment by other campmates,

---

<sup>121</sup> *The Bay State Sentinel*, 21 March 1940, p. 9.

<sup>122</sup> Following in the footsteps of historian Sarah Deutsch, I use the term “Chicano” here to refer to native Spanish-Americans and Mexican immigrants. Although it is a controversial term because of its ambivalent etymology, Deutsch points out that it is used today to signify “the common experience of Spanish-speaking, Spanish-heritage, or Spanish-surnamed people.” In other instances I use terms that the men self-identified with. Sarah Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge: Culture, Class, and Gender on an Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest, 1880-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), vii.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid*, 140.

<sup>124</sup> “Letter Box,” *The Four and One Times*, 18 August 1934.

<sup>125</sup> Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge*, 136. The sugar-beet industry was one of the largest employers of Chicanos in Colorado; it hired 20,000 laborers for the grueling work of harvesting the beet fields. Many Chicanos, beginning in the 1920s, established communities and migrant villages in the northern part of the state to work in this industry. These communities of Spanish-American and Mexican migrants consciously separated their communities.

white and Chicano, became poor enough to warrant a public outcry in their defense. In another letter to *The Four and One Times*, an anonymous writer spelled out the conditions of Mexican workers' lives:

The capitalists are the principle reason for it. They exploited cheap labor and baited many by fake stories. They told many of the good opportunities in this country. They got many of them to come and work for a dollar a day when our workers were getting four and five in the same length of time. Now they tell them to get out as they can no longer be used.<sup>126</sup>

The political consciousness of the passage is striking and its tone of authority suggests that an administrator wrote the article. The writer went on to remind white enrollees that, "...we are all human, so let us act like humans. If you don't like the Mexican boys leave them alone. Don't try to treat them like animals and make their camp life miserable."<sup>127</sup>

One voice, however, did little to stop pervasive racism and discriminatory practices. Although educational advisors promoted English classes for Spanish-speaking men in Rocky Mountain, the administration took no other visible part in attempting to assuage the affects of racism in camp or to help Chicano enrollees adjust to new surroundings. The Chicano men responded many times by deserting. A letter from the Colorado State Department of Public Welfare to Department of Labor director Frank W. Persons reports that, "...the greatest number of desertions occurs among the Spanish-speaking boys." Instead of faulting camp administrators, however, the letter concludes that the "nature and temperament of the Spanish-speaking boys" was to blame.<sup>128</sup> In 1939, the state administrators and officials within CCC District Headquarters responded to the "Spanish-American" problem by assigning Chicano men to camps "near communities that would accept them."<sup>129</sup> Without complete company rosters and statistics of Chicano enrollees in Rocky Mountain, it is difficult to assess how this decision affected the camps there. Although it did not prevent Spanish-speaking enrollees from being placed in the Park, their numbers were likely reduced there.<sup>130</sup>

The majority of the men in Rocky Mountain camps identified as white but came from varied ethnic and regional backgrounds. As one enrollee expressed in his poem "Our League of Nations,"

---

<sup>126</sup> "Equality," *The Four and One Times*, 4 August 1934, p. 2.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Earl M. Kouns to Frank W. Persons, 21 October 1940, File folder 6, "Correspondence – Desertion and Complaints, 1935-1942," Container 30252, Records of the State Department of Public Welfare, 1933-1942, Colorado State Archives, Denver.

<sup>129</sup> Quoted in Parham, "The Civilian Conservation Corps in Colorado," 142.

<sup>130</sup> Chicano experiences in Colorado CCC camps parallel those in other states. For a detailed study of Chicano experiences in the CCC, see Maria E. Montoya, "The Roots of Economic and Ethnic Divisions in Northern New Mexico: The Case of the Civilian Conservation Corps," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (Spring, 1995), 14-34.

We have Russians; We have Jews; We have good boys, bad are fews.  
We have Irish; We have Warps [sic]; You boys must use the barber shops.  
We have Frenchmen, we have Greeks; We have classes every weeks;  
We have Germans, we have Swedes. We have a mess hall where we feeds.<sup>131</sup>

Although some tension existed between young men from different ethnicities, the extant sources do not convey a serious antagonism between boys who identified as white but were from different regional backgrounds, as was the case in other camps.<sup>132</sup> This does not mean that tensions were completely absent. It is probable that a common race identity eclipsed what could have been regional factionalism, particularly if the men were reacting to the presence of other race populations in the camps.

No enrollee could escape the presence of rivalries, antagonistic encounters, and exclusive cliques, which turned some young men into social outsiders. Enrollees often had to display physical prowess, either through self-defense, work, or athletics, to gain respect. Boxing, for example, was a popular pastime and made heroes of those who possessed physical force. Furthermore, the Army officers looked the other way and even encouraged other displays of power and aggression. Ruben Foos, a veteran of NP-4, recounted one such incident for the *Estes Park Trail* years after the event. He and other enrollees ““sort of took over a tavern”” one night in Granby, a town nearby Grand Lake. A fight erupted between the CCC group and “local Granby toughs” and someone went to inform a nearby Army supervisor. The officer asked how the enrollees were doing in the fight, and when told that they were successfully defending themselves, replied, ““Good, then I won’t have to send down another truckload to help them out.””<sup>133</sup>

The young men also expected each other to pursue young women, exemplified by the somewhat alarming quip, “When the C.C. boys go to town, it isn’t will power a girl needs, it’s won’t power.”<sup>134</sup> When dating did occur between the men and local young women, the enrollees found great humor in embarrassing each other in the newsletters. The *Long’s Peak Echo* editors publicly humiliated two enrollees by stealing and reprinting their emotive love letters.<sup>135</sup> Other newsletters mocked specific enrollees for being afraid of women (“We’d like to know why Schlue runs from girls”), laughable dating habits, and hygienic carelessness shown by not bathing or having “eccentric” appearances.<sup>136</sup> But, success with women also had consequences; because “there was never an army yet which behaved like a Sunday school,” medical doctors regularly tested for and treated sexually transmitted diseases.<sup>137</sup>

---

<sup>131</sup> “Our League of Nations,” *The Bay State Sentinel*, 21 March 1940.

<sup>132</sup> For conflict between enrollees from northern and southern states, see Patrick Clancy, “Conserving the Youth: The Civilian Conservation Corps Experience in Shenandoah National Park,” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 105, no. 4 (Autumn, 1997), 439-472.

<sup>133</sup> Dan Campbell, “Low pay and hard work remain as golden memories for CCCers,” *Estes Park Trail*, 2 September 1983, p. 7.

<sup>134</sup> *Long’s Peak Joker*, 25 January 1935, p. 2.

<sup>135</sup> “A Bit of Comedy,” *Long’s Peak Echo*, 5 June 1937, p. 6.

<sup>136</sup> *Long’s Peak Echo*, October 1938, p. 8; “Personalities,” *The Four and One Times*, 4 August 1934, p. 3.

<sup>137</sup> Loomis, “The CCC Digs In,” *Liberty* (5 May 1934), 46.

Beyond connecting with each other and the local populace, the enrollees also formed relationships with the surrounding natural environment. Specifically, living and working in the Park represented to many of them a rite of passage into manhood. In this way, enrollees' expectations mirrored that of their administrators and other proponents of social conservation. Through camp life, for example, the enrollees would become courageous and independent by overcoming their own fears. The heavily wooded areas of the Park represented places of mystery and uncertainty. Fear of the forests was common enough to elicit a section in a nationally distributed CCC pamphlet about the "fancied perils" of woods lore. The article featured a drawing of a dragon-like creature with the caption, "THERE AIN'T NO SUCH ANIMAL!" It reassured enrollees that they were "much safer from accident in the wilderness than in towns and cities," again drawing upon the notion that overcrowded cities equaled pollution, squalor, and vice.<sup>138</sup> Instead of similarly allaying any suspicions that the incoming young men might have, seasoned enrollees in the Park took advantage of their fears and used the forests as a place of baptism into the Corps. In one instance, enrollees commanded that some new arrivals at NP-4 go on "guard duty" at various fire towers in the Park, all of which were located in relatively remote areas. The young men had to stand guard alone well into the night until the older pranksters finally went to fetch them. The new enrollees had to prove themselves by remaining at their posts in spite of the eeriness of the dark forests.<sup>139</sup> Whether this act aided in abating the young men's wariness of the forests is debatable, but what is clear is that the enrollees expected newcomers to conquer their own fear. While camping at a worksite, Loomis noted that many of the enrollees were afraid of the surrounding woods: "When we heard a cowardly coyote whoopie-larruping the mountain echoes, some of the boys trembled and sweated in their shoes. And when a hoot owl went off suddenly, the roots of their hair prickled." But, eventually the enrollees conquered these fears and learned "the only thing to fear out here is loss of courage." Their fearlessness and self-reliance that were products of living in the Park were essential traits of becoming men.<sup>140</sup>

All of the young men went through an initiation by virtue of their exposure to the dramatic scenery and seasonal weather patterns of the Park. For some incoming enrollees, the Rocky Mountains were just as effective in inspiring intimidation and awe as the introductory speech of the camp commander. Many of the young men who came to the Park were native Coloradoans and were familiar with the towering, rugged peaks. But many also came from outside states such as Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Connecticut, and Massachusetts, and the landscape was in stark contrast to the endless horizons or rolling hills that they were accustomed to. Some were incredulous and instantly enamored. R.W. Menefee, for instance, agreed with many other CCC enrollees and supervisors in feeling like "the luckiest people in the world in getting the privilege of being sent to work in the Rocky Mountain National Park." According to Menefee, the work was difficult but "it has been nothing but pleasure and admiration in this beautiful scenery that surrounds us."<sup>141</sup> This enrollee and others discovered a newfound appreciation for their magnificent environs.

---

<sup>138</sup> "Woodsmanship for the Civilian Conservation Corps," Contribution from the Forestry Divisions, Civilian Conservation Corps, June 1938, Pamphlet File, Agnes Wright Spring Collection, Archives, University of Colorado at Boulder Libraries p. 4.

<sup>139</sup> "New Enrollees Risk Lives in Wilderness," *The Four and One Times*, 4 August 1934, p. 1.

<sup>140</sup> Loomis, "The Fight for the Forests," 41.

<sup>141</sup> R.W. Menefee, "Let's Get Acquainted," *The Hidden Valley Murmurs*, 28 May 1938, p. 3.

Other enrollees felt alienated from the craggy, formidable Front Range and its arid climate and severe winters. They complained in the newsletters about the wind and snow, particularly of the inability of their housing structures to shelter them from the elements: "...snow sifted through the cracks and literally covered the barracks including the sleeping occupants."<sup>142</sup> The severe winters also wreaked havoc on camp water systems and left enrollees with insufficient quantities of water for drinking and bathing. The conditions caused some young men to quit the camps entirely. Camp administrators implored the enrollees not to desert the camps because of the harsh winters. One officer appealed to the enrollees to "make doubly sure that your mind is fully made up before you leave" and be "repaid for the winter months by the delightful weather and beautiful scenery ... during the summer."<sup>143</sup>

Enrollees did not always silently await their compensation of the mild and resplendent summer months. Instead, they contested the administration's failure to adequately respond to the winter weather. In May of 1933, the first enrollees came to camp NP-1 only to be hit by a sudden damaging snowstorm. The snowfall was too strong and the cold too bitter for the Army to construct enough tents for the arriving young men, there was a paucity of supplies, and administration had not yet given the near-exposed enrollees their wool uniforms. According to Loomis, the young men "began to riot – they were freezing to death." Their protests paid off and administration quickly moved them into Moraine Park Lodge, one of the several lodges in the Park still in existence, and the Utility Area until the camp construction was complete.<sup>144</sup>

Clearly the human actors in the Park lacked the ability to control nature, but they could conquer it through the swing of their ax. The enrollees' perceived ability to master nature through their work projects also made it a space of transformation. As Loomis remarked, "Whatever we are doing to the forests, they are teaching us how to save ourselves."<sup>145</sup> CCC administrators agreed with Loomis that the mountains made men of the enrollees. This initiation occurred by the young men laboring on the very agent of change – the landscape. The men had a specific image of themselves as workers in the Park, no doubt spurred by nationally distributed CCC literature that featured a muscular male as the organization's logo.<sup>146</sup> The young men appropriated this image – a strong masculine body created by physical labor and a rugged lifestyle – and included it in their own expectations of ways that the CCC would transform them. On the cover of one edition of the *Long's Peak Echo* from Camp NP-4, for instance, the staff "artist" depicted a shirtless enrollee confidently brandishing an ax after felling a tree.<sup>147</sup> His muscular physique matches the mountainous terrain included behind him. Although the artistry is obviously that of an amateur, the drawing is a clear representation that hard work in the natural setting brought about physical vigor. Still today, the enrollee is depicted as a chiseled young man leaning confidently on his ax in the standard "CCC Worker" statues that memorialize CCC sites across the nation.<sup>148</sup>

---

<sup>142</sup> "Camp Four Gets a Touch of the Cyclones," *Texas Tidbits*, Company 3884, Camp NP-4-C, n.d., p. 2.

<sup>143</sup> "To You That Leave NP-4-C," *Texas Tidbits*, n.d., p. 2.

<sup>144</sup> Battell Loomis, "With the Green Guard," *Liberty* (April 29, 1934), 52.

<sup>145</sup> Battell Loomis, "The Fight For the Forests," 41.

<sup>146</sup> For an example of this national image of a CCC enrollee, see "Woodsmanship for the Civilian Conservation Corps," p. 1.

<sup>147</sup> *Long's Peak Echo*, October 1938, p. 1.

<sup>148</sup> For images of this statue, visit <http://www.cccalumni.org/worker.html>.

Arguably more important to the enrollees than physical transformation, work in the Park brought a monthly paycheck. The government paid the men thirty dollars a month, twenty-five of which went as an allotment to a previously specified family member or dependent. The men kept the other five, although this amount increased as the economy slowly improved in the late thirties and early forties.<sup>149</sup> Not all of the men accepted their monthly pay indiscriminately - they were aware of the government's role in their subsistence. One anonymous enrollee expressed cynically that, "The army and the park service try and see who can work us the most, and Roosevelt sits back in his chair and bets us thirty bucks a month that we can't take it."<sup>150</sup> Others were resentful that their hard-earned pay went to help their parents. Enrollees in the Park could often be heard chanting on the job, "Another day, another dollar. I get the day, my mammy gets the dollar."<sup>151</sup> *The Hidden Valley Murmurs* of Camp NP-1 printed a poem entitled, "Song of the Lazy Farmer" - an ode to slothful parents everywhere that sent their children into the CCC to reap the cash benefits.<sup>152</sup> Not all men sent their allotment home begrudgingly, however; Monroe Smith of NP-4 remembered that, "all the CCC guys were sincere boys who wanted to get ahead and help their families while they were doing it."<sup>153</sup> Whatever their motives, the goal to "get ahead" was strong enough that enrollees opted to act as a provider for their families back home.

The men used their monthly payment to enrich their own lives. The ability to buy clothes, candy, magazines, or to save their earnings, was a newfound source of pride. They became accustomed to frequenting the camp canteen to buy necessities and frivolities. The camp stores, they soon learned, catered to their wants as consumers; one newsletter writer reminded enrollees at NP-4 that, "that the merchandise sold in the Exchange is the type of goods you want and wish."<sup>154</sup> Some enrollees preferred to patronize outside vendors, and all had access to the local movie theater and other recreational venues in Estes Park. The guaranteed income allowed men to tap into current fashion modes and create or expand identities through their consumerism; two enrollees from Camp NP-7 in Grand Lake bought cowboy hats and shirts from a local trading post that were meant to impress girls and their fellow campmates.<sup>155</sup> Another NP-7 enrollee started his own in-camp lending business in order to accumulate extra dividends and increase his "earning power." He began charging high interest on loans he made to the other men, who used the money for clothing and trips into town.<sup>156</sup> The Army officials, however, frowned upon this kind of entrepreneurial spirit, and they were quick to halt any such operation. Still, enrollees found creative ways to spend their money as well as to create additional income.

---

<sup>149</sup> "Manual for Selecting Enrollees for Civilian Conservation Corps," Colorado State Department of Public Welfare, 1 June 1939, p. 54, state relief records. In 1939 the payments allotted to the enrollees had increased three dollars.

<sup>150</sup> *Long's Peak Joker*, December 1934.

<sup>151</sup> Lloyd K. Musselman, *Rocky Mountain National Park, Administrative History, 1915-1916* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Interior, 1971), 97. Merlin K. Potts, a Park CCC foreman, recounted this chant for Musselman in an oral interview.

<sup>152</sup> *The Hidden Valley Murmurs*, 28 May 1938, p. 5.

<sup>153</sup> Dan Campbell, "Low Pay and Hard Work Remain as Golden Memories for CCCers," p. 7.

<sup>154</sup> "Your Canteen," *Long's Peak Echo*, 22 May 1937, p. 3.

<sup>155</sup> Marvin Marsh, Acting Assistant Adjutant General of Eight Corps Area, to the War Department, Washington D.C., 5 August 1939, inspection reports.

<sup>156</sup> Testimony of Owen L. Desenberg to William F. Boutz, 23 July 1939, inspection reports.



The men were cognizant that their monthly pay, although minimal, allowed them to become consumers. They used this newfound ability to spend money as a kind of leverage for power and recognition in the surrounding communities. One writer reminded the town citizens of Estes Park that, “We should make ‘real friends,’ as we have to much in common. . . . We spend our money with your merchants and in return, have been shown the very best of courtesy and services of which we expect and appreciate.”<sup>157</sup> According to this newsletter editor, the enrollees were successful in gaining respect through their role as consumers. Another CCC enrollee, quoted in an *Estes Park Trail* editorial, argued similarly that, “. . . although we have only a small amount to spend, there are 200 of us and the total amounts to quite a bit.”<sup>158</sup>

Communities throughout Colorado, and arguably nationwide, welcomed the CCC because of the influx of enrollee dollars.<sup>159</sup> But, aside from their identities as consumers, enrollees did not always receive respect from local citizens. Locals in Estes Park, for instance, began calling the enrollees “Woodpeckers” and “Woodticks” in 1933, in reference to the red sightseeing buses that carried them to and from their work jobs. Although the name was likely not meant as an insult, enrollees believed that it made reference to their reliance on government work. One of them voiced this sentiment in the *Trail*:

We of the Civilian Conservation Corps are puzzled at the variety of names applied to us. Although they do us no real harm, we are often embarrassed when called ‘Woodpeckers’ or ‘Woodticks.’ What did President Roosevelt call his peacetime army set up to combat the depression? At no time does he refer to any of the branches, the C.W.A., P.W.A., or the C.C.C., as paupers. On the contrary, these organizations are for the purpose of giving honest useful work to those who can’t get private work because of conditions that are beyond their control, but who want to give value for value received.

It was true that the enrollees did not always earn the respect they felt they deserved. One enrollee admitted that the “soiled reputation” of the CCC was based on “a good deal of noise and petty misbehaviors,” but argued that, “any given large group placed together in similar circumstances, will react in the same way.” He added that enrollees had to suffer similar abuse from Estes Park citizens because of perceived class differences:

The town flourishes in excellent fashion because of money taken from tourists. With a continuous assurance of such money (God Bless the Mountains) a high toned attitude can be easily afforded. The old fashioned, often remade clothing worn by the [enrollees] is a detriment to such an atmosphere, and judging from the expressions on various faces, gives it a barn yard aroma.<sup>160</sup>

According to this enrollee, the young men were subjected to verbal insults because of their “station” and the “fancied superiority” of Estes Park citizens. As a result, fights broke out between groups and town establishments began to ban enrollees. The writer thus advised

---

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>158</sup> Anonymous enrollee quoted in an untitled editorial, *Estes Park Trail*, 4 January 1935, p. 4.

<sup>159</sup> Parham, “The Civilian Conservation Corps in Colorado,” 127.

<sup>160</sup> “Truth is Stranger Than Fiction,” *The Four and One Times*, 21 July 1934, p. 2.

enrollees to “act a gentleman as nearly as possible” and “ignore sarcastic remarks even though you are capable of tearing the guilty party into two parts.”<sup>161</sup> Enrollees did not always heed this counsel; every new company that transferred into the camps had to prove to the surrounding community that they were ““good citizens in every sense of the word.””<sup>162</sup> They normally were successful; as noted in chapter one, Estes Park citizens were often generous in giving their time and resources to the young men.

Ultimately, enrollee reactions to the CCC were not pre-determined by Army and Park administrators. Although forms of control filtered in through discipline, a relatively strict time schedule, and work, each enrollee was free to reject the constraints of camp life. Many in fact did choose to desert or protest in response to unfair treatment, harsh weather conditions, and exposure to racism or discrimination. The enrollees that did remain gained real benefits from the Corps – work experience, shelter from depressed economic conditions, and a stable income. Many of them, who went on to serve in World War II, later appreciated the informal introduction into a quasi-military lifestyle. Whether or not the individual decided to stay or to leave, to act out against officials or remain complacent, enrollees’ lives and experiences in the Park cannot be separated from the work they did there. The important tangible legacy of the CCC will be explored in the next chapter.

---

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Anonymous enrollee quoted in an untitled editorial, *Estes Park Trail*, 4 January 1935, p. 4.

## CHAPTER 3

### ENROLLEE WORK IN ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK<sup>163</sup>

I am thankful that we have such a fine place in which we work, namely The Rocky Mountain National Park, it is truly “God’s Paradise,” how fortunate we are when we stop to think that over five hundred and fifty thousand people visited this place and spent large sums of money just to spend their vacations and we are being paid to live and work in this paradise.<sup>164</sup>

--Project Superintendent David Haggerty to enrollees of NP-4-C

Franklin D. Roosevelt would have agreed with historian Kenneth R. Olwig’s assessment that “national parks seem to be as much about national identity as about physical nature.”<sup>165</sup> That is why he supported Harold Ickes, then head of the Department of Interior, in naming 1934 as “National Parks Year.” During a commemoration speech in August of that year, FDR explained the importance of these landscapes for the American people:

There is nothing so American as our national parks. The scenery and wildlife are native and the fundamental idea behind the parks is native. It is, in brief, that the country belongs to the people; that what it is and what is in the process of making is for the enrichment of the lives of all of us. Thus the parks stand as the outward symbol of this great human principle.

He encouraged the public to take advantage of the egalitarian nature of the parks in their leisure time; he assured them that, unlike parklands in other nations, “they are not for the rich alone. Camping is free, the sanitation is excellent.” He concluded his oration by suggesting that every year be “National Parks Year.”<sup>166</sup> These ideals of the virtues of national parks were no different than those expressed by National Park Service officials; Stephen Mather, the first director of the Park Service, and his predecessor Horace Albright both imagined the parks as landscapes that would inspire patriotism in all American citizens.<sup>167</sup>

Rocky Mountain National Park administrators, including those who acted as project superintendents and foremen in the CCC camps, shared Roosevelt’s conviction that national parks were democratic spaces and they expressed this belief repeatedly to enrollees working in the Park. In a farewell article to members of Camp NP-4-C, project superintendent D.W. Haggerty reminded enrollees that they were “accomplishing more work for the benefit of all the people of the United States than any other agency,” and that “the conservation of Uncle Sam’s

---

<sup>163</sup> CCC work in the Park is so extensive that it would be difficult to include all of it in this chapter. Instead, I’ve divided the work up into broad categories that are comprised of a sampling of enrollee work projects. Please refer to Appendix A for a more complete summation of CCC work.

<sup>164</sup> D.W. Haggerty, “What Am I Thankful For?” *Texas Tidbits*, Company 3884, Camp NP-4-C, 26 November 1936.

<sup>165</sup> Kenneth R. Olwig, “Reinventing Common Nature: Yosemite and Mount Rushmore – A Meandering Tale of Double Nature,” in *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), 380.

<sup>166</sup> “The President’s Address on Parks,” reprinted in the *New York Times*, 6 August 1934, p. 3.

<sup>167</sup> Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 88.

natural resources is an accomplishment that cannot be estimated in dollars or cents.”<sup>168</sup> In another, similar message, a Park official told enrollees that, “The National Parks are the playgrounds of the nation, for the enjoyment of the many, rather than a select few. You should be proud of the work you are doing.”<sup>169</sup> These administrators strongly emphasized that the Park was a classless space, one that was open and accessible to all.

The Park was certainly available for use by the public; there were no entrance fees until the late 1930s and it cost nothing to fish, camp, or hike in the Park’s interior. But Rocky Mountain was, particularly during the Depression years, accessible only to those who could afford an automobile and had the luxury of vacation time from work. The lower classes, unless local to the area, were largely excluded from the Park and its neighboring resort communities, Grand Lake and particularly Estes Park. This is why Haggerty, the same project superintendent who stressed the democratic aspects of the parklands, reminded the CCC enrollees that they should feel privileged to be living and working in such magnificent environs: “...how fortunate we are when we stop to think that over five hundred and fifty thousand people visited this place and spent large sums of money just to spend their vacations and we are being paid to live and work in this paradise.”<sup>170</sup> Haggerty’s comment suggests that having money was indeed a prerequisite for recreating among the 14,000-foot peaks of the Park; he was well aware that the surrounding area catered to wealthier tourists and Estes Park and Grand Lake thrived on the dollars of those visitors.

The work programs of the Civilian Conservation Corps in the Park also accommodated the expectations of tourists who came to spend their leisure time in Rocky Mountain. At that time, land conservation for scenic purposes was still largely an upper-class value. Although the notion of nature as “moral resource” reached well into the nineteenth century, the value of preserving wilderness lands was only shared by “Easterners of literary and artistic bents” and privileged westerners.<sup>171</sup> Among these groups, a growing interest in wilderness paralleled a broad effort to preserve it for the benefit of people, an endeavor that the federal government (under the auspices of the National Park Service) soon became a part of.<sup>172</sup> But, as historian Roderick Nash makes clear, not everyone shared in this movement to preserve the land. Other groups saw value in land for what it yielded economically, whether through crops, minerals, or lumber. Nash argues that even in the 1930s, “the masses resented the loss involved in preserving wilderness...”<sup>173</sup> Rocky Mountain superintendent David Canfield was aware of this sentiment and declared in 1941, even after eight years of CCC work, that, “Conservation of natural resources is not popular here” because of Colorado’s “exploitation tradition...”<sup>174</sup>

---

<sup>168</sup> D.W. Haggerty, “Good-By Boys,” *Long’s Peak Echo*, Camp NP-4-C, Company 3884, September 1938, p. 6.

<sup>169</sup> Paul E. Stephens, “The Work You Are Doing!” *Long’s Peak Echo*, 28 October 1938, p. 5.

<sup>170</sup> D.W. Haggerty, “What Am I Thankful For?” 26 November 1936.

<sup>171</sup> Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 96. For a more nuanced history of ideas of wilderness and preservation in the United States, see especially chapters three through nine.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 44, 67, 105-107.

<sup>173</sup> Nash, *Wilderness in the American Mind*, 205.

<sup>174</sup> Superintendent Annual Reports [hereafter cited as SAR], 1941, Rocky Mountain National Park Historical Collection [hereafter cited as RMNPHC], p. 15.

When Roosevelt began enacting federal legislation that prioritized conservation, skeptics of wilderness preservation were prevalent enough for National Park Service officials to ensure the general public that conservation did not impede on economic interests. One nationally released pamphlet on national parks and CCC work assured readers that many species of trees in the national parks, for instance, had “no commercial value.” Furthermore, officials assured sportsmen that curtailing hunting rights in the parks was “for the benefit of the hunters, for the wildlife thrives and multiplies under the protection afforded in these breeding places, and eventually there is an overflow from the parks to the adjoining territory.”<sup>175</sup> National CCC administrators felt pressure even to explain to enrollees that conservation work was financially viable; a circular on forestry work in the Corps defines conservation as “the preservation of natural resources for economic uses.”<sup>176</sup>

Enrollees may have entered the Corps with wariness or indifference toward their work, but park officials wanted to make sure and win them, and other doubters, over to conservation ethics. Rocky Mountain administrators were hopeful that the “many men engaged in emergency conservation work ... will continue to devote themselves to conservation...”<sup>177</sup> They hoped to instill enrollees with values of conservation in place of land exploitation, “which means the wasteful use of any resource.”<sup>178</sup> CCC supervisors repeatedly tried to “impress upon [the enrollees] the importance of their work ...” and “bring a better understanding of the Service to the men in the camps.” They did this not only with speeches about the importance of Park work, but also by conducting mandatory classes, such as “The Landscape Department,” “The Educational Department,” and “Forestry in the Parks,” that focused on conservation principles and Park operations.<sup>179</sup> In Rocky Mountain, enrollees learned first hand that nature could be enjoyed simply for its scenic qualities. And through the work of the government-sanctioned CCC, National Park Service employees hoped that wilderness preservation would become normalized and the gospel of conservation would spread forth.

In the 1930s, however, it was still mostly the middle and upper classes that valued the land for scenic purposes and that made up the Park’s tourist base. They needed no convincing of the virtues of vacationing out-of-doors, but they did come with preconceived notions of what they would experience in a National Park. Isabelle Story, a press agent for the CCC, put tourist expectations bluntly: “for roads, trails, and buildings [to] ... provide a maximum of scenic view, at the same time being as inconspicuous as possible themselves.”<sup>180</sup> Visitors wanted nothing less than pristine wilderness, unmarred by human presence. National park landscape architects and civil engineers, who devised CCC work projects, aspired to satisfy these visitors – they aimed in their plans and projects for the impression of complete wilderness. And thanks to government

---

<sup>175</sup> Isabelle F. Story, *The National Parks and Emergency Conservation Work* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1936), 8, 18.

<sup>176</sup> “Woodsmanship for the Civilian Conservation Corps,” Contribution from the Forestry Divisions, Civilian Conservation Corps, June 1938, 12, Pamphlet File, Agnes Wright Spring Collection, Archives at University of Colorado at Boulder Libraries.

<sup>177</sup> Story, *The National Parks*, 24.

<sup>178</sup> “Woodsmanship for the Civilian Conservation Corps,” 12.

<sup>179</sup> “Memorandum to Park and E.C.W. Officials,” Superintendent’s Monthly Report [hereafter cited as SMR], June 1935, RMNPHC.

<sup>180</sup> Story, *The National Parks and Emergency Conservation Work*, 16.

largesse, Park policy in the thirties orbited around creating an easily consumable space of “wilderness” that more and more middle-class vacationers sought in their annual sojourns. Dubbed by National Park Service historian Richard West Sellars as “façade management,” Park work initiatives focused on the kind of conservation projects that upheld the public’s expected ideas of a wild, mountainous aesthetic – primeval forest, dramatic peaks and valleys, and absolutely no evidence of a human presence beyond necessary Park facilities.<sup>181</sup> It sought to retain an aesthetic appearance of wildness while continuing to develop the land for increased use.

Landscape architects and civic engineers, relatively new additions to the Park’s payroll in the thirties, based their work plans on national planning initiatives.<sup>182</sup> The Landscape Division of the National Park Service (later the Branch of Plans and Design) began producing master plans for each park in 1932 that detailed the construction of trail systems, roads, buildings, and outlined projects for major and minor development areas. Projects of a larger scale normally had their own drawings and narrative reports to explain the work in detail. Rocky Mountain landscape architects and engineers, often hired especially with emergency conservation funds, implemented the plans in the Park using CCC labor. Master plans were revised every year and updated with construction completions and suggested changes.<sup>183</sup>

Planners used the detailed proposals to employ time-honed aesthetic principles noted above for landscape and building construction. Their ability to control and create such pristine views for tourists drew on the guidelines of earlier landscape designers such as Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., Charles Eliot, and later designers Frank Waugh and Charles Wilhelm. These early designers borrowed from eighteenth and nineteenth century English landscaped gardens that featured diverse topography, scenic views, and “natural features such as vegetations, streams, and rock outcroppings.” This type of naturalistic aesthetic valued the use of native material for bridges, culverts, and wooden construction. For Park construction projects, planners incorporated visual elements from Shingle, Prairie, and Adirondack architectural styles to create a building method known generally as Rustic.<sup>184</sup>

Park Service construction and landscaping methods in the thirties continued to focus on creating fluidity with the surrounding environment, allowing for only minimal obstruction to the landscape so that the viewing gaze would not be jarred by “the handiwork of man in the face of the work of God.”<sup>185</sup> Using manuals such as Albert Good’s *Park Structures and Facilities* and E.P. Meineke’s *Camp Planning and Camp Reconstruction*, Park designers and engineers made sure that trail and road circulation arteries acquiesced to natural features, that bridges, culverts, fireplaces, and directional signs were made of native materials, and that building construction

---

<sup>181</sup> Sellars, *Preserving Nature*, 4.

<sup>182</sup> For a diagram of these employees’ responsibilities regarding CCC work, see John Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Park Service* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1985), 68.

<sup>183</sup> Linda McClelland, *Building the National Parks: Historic Landscape Design and Construction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 300-306.

<sup>184</sup> McClelland, *Building the National Parks*, 18. The roots of park landscape design are too extensive to cover in this thesis; see especially chapters one and two of McClelland.

<sup>185</sup> Grosvenor Atterbury, “Notes on the Architectural and Other Esthetic Problems Involved in the Development of Our Great National Parks,” August and September 1929, 6, National Park Service, Denver Service Center, Technical Information Center; McClelland, *Building the National Parks*, 2-7.

followed established Park Rustic architectural methods.<sup>186</sup> While allowing for development and thus creating greater accessibility for tourists, the Park Service sought to give the illusion of a truly wild and natural environment. The CCC enhanced this effort tenfold.

The Park assigned CCC groups to work projects based on their location. Camps NP-3, NP-7, and NP-12 engaged in work on the western side of the continental divide, and camps NP-1, NP-4, and NP-11 carried out projects in the eastern portion of the Park. Because it was mandatory that enrollees have access to proper food and water supplies, they could not labor on projects in high altitudes or deep within the Park interior. Normally the worksite was relatively accessible from the camp by truck or on foot; in some cases, if the project so required, Park supervisors and enrollees established smaller stub camps closer to the worksite that they equipped with sleeping tents, a mess facility, and medical supplies. Once on any job, problems arose because of inadequate or inefficient work equipment. Although national authorities allocated ECW funds to the Park for equipment purchases, equipment inventories attached to camp inspection reports commonly described heavy equipment in “fair” and “poor” condition.<sup>187</sup> Lack of proper supervision in camps also proved problematic. In 1935 at Camp NP-7, for instance, the superintendent reported “considerable delay” in work projects because of a failure to find adequate supervisory personnel.<sup>188</sup> No obstacle, however, proved too serious to prevent crews from managing an ambitious work program every period, which lasted six months.<sup>189</sup> CCC work projects in Rocky Mountain can be divided into three broad categories: those that worked to further develop the Park, those that focused on a cultivating a particular aesthetic, and those that provided protection for the Park against erosion, fire, and insects.

Providing greater access to the Park’s interior lands and creating more opportunities for recreation were main features of the CCC work program. As tourists increased, so did the need for new and reconstructed trails, modern campgrounds, and updated Park facilities. Trails in particular were important – as early as 1924, superintendent Roger Toll remarked that Rocky Mountain “is unusually well suited for development as a trail park....”<sup>190</sup> The area already had trails dating back to centuries before when Ute and Arapaho Indians passed through to the western Rockies. In the early days before the national park, the land was a known resort and recreation space, and guides conducted groups through the forested interiors and upwards towards the snow-laden peaks, creating newer trails that the Park would inherit. In 1915, when the Park officially began, there were 128.5 miles of trails. Although funds were limited, Park trail crews managed to increase this number to about 200 by 1932. When the CCC ended its occupancy, there were approximately 300 miles of trails, although regular Park trail crews and

---

<sup>186</sup> McClelland, *Building the National Parks*, 7.

<sup>187</sup> D.W. Haggerty, “Automotive and Heavy Equipment assigned to Camps NP-4-C, NP-11-C and NP-12-C in Rocky Mountain National Park,” attached to Supplementary Report, Camp NP-4, Company 3884, 1 October 1940, Box 37, “Division of Investigations,” “Camp Inspection Reports, 1933-1942,” Entry 15, RG 35, National Archives II, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>188</sup> SAR, 1935d, p. 1.

<sup>189</sup> Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*, 214. There were nineteen six-month periods in the course of the program’s existence.

<sup>190</sup> SAR, 1924, p. 2. For a more thorough understanding of trails in Rocky Mountain National Park, see Sierra Standish, Cheri Yost, and Bill Butler, “Rocky Mountain National Park MPS (Additional documentation - Trails),” of the Rocky Mountain National Park multiple property documentation form.

Public Works employees constructed some of these. Still, the enrollees were largely the driving force behind creating, maintaining, and reconstructing many popular trails.<sup>191</sup>

Although the extant sources do not always specify which trails were being constructed and reconstructed, trails were clearly highly prioritized in CCC work programs. By 1938, enrollees had already constructed 20.8 miles of trails and the *Estes Park Trail* noted that, “heretofore inaccessible sections of the Park are reached by the new trails, four feet in width, crossing the deeper streams on log type bridges.”<sup>192</sup> One such foot trail, for instance, was a path from Glacier Basin to a point “south of Camp Woods” that would connect Park lands to the nearby YMCA grounds.<sup>193</sup> Some of the trails, such as the Red Mountain, Columbine Creek, and Colorado River trails, were initially for use as fire trails and eventually taken over by tourists on foot. Every work period, the CCC also provided regular maintenance on the low altitude trail systems, as well as reconstructing trails such as the path from the Pool to the Brinwood Hotel and the Twin Sisters mountain trail.<sup>194</sup>

Enrollees also worked to bolster the Park’s campgrounds to accommodate the burgeoning number of tourists using camping facilities. In the twenties, the Park had five campgrounds: Longs Peak, used by those scaling to the summit; Pineledge, close to Estes Park and used by “campers who to prefer to be near the village;” Endovalley, mainly populated by fisherman; Aspenglen, adjacent to the Fall River; and Glacier Basin, close to the popular Bear Lake. Of these, only the last two had “caretakers” and, by 1933, they and the Endovalley campground proved to be the most popular in the Park for incoming tourists.<sup>195</sup> Because of their popularity and antiquated facilities, the enrollees worked chiefly on developing these three campgrounds and later, in 1941, constructing Timber Creek on the western side of the Park.

In several of the annual reports, the superintendent assured national administrators that the CCC enrollees and their supervisors completed campground work “in accordance with the recommendations of Dr. Nienicke [sic].”<sup>196</sup> He was referring to E.P. Meinecke’s *Camp Ground Policy* of 1932, later extended into a longer treatise called *Camp Planning and Camp Reconstruction* in 1934. Meinecke was a plant pathologist and developed his designs in collaboration with the Forest Service, but, in acknowledgment of his innovative campground planning, the National Park Service soon adopted the “Meinecke plan” as well.<sup>197</sup> The basic precept was to reduce the human-inflicted trauma on the native vegetation by carefully ordering campgrounds using one-way roads, centralized automobile parking, and specifically designated camping lots with their own fireplaces and table and bench combinations.<sup>198</sup>

---

<sup>191</sup> William C. Ramaley, “Trails and Trailbuilders of RMNP,” n.d., RMNPHC, 61.

<sup>192</sup> “Work of CCC Great Benefit to Park,” *Estes Park Trail*, 22 April 1938, p. 14.

<sup>193</sup> “CCC Workers Finish New Section of Trail,” *Estes Park Trail*, 14 September 1934, p. 7.

<sup>194</sup> “CCC Workers Have Long List of Achievements in Park,” *Estes Park Trail*, 17 April 1936, p. 16. This sampling is meant to provide a general understanding of trail work. For more specific examples, please see Appendix A.

<sup>195</sup> SAR, 1930, 15.

<sup>196</sup> SAR, 1933, 6.

<sup>197</sup> McLelland, *Building the National Parks*, 7.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, 276-285.



The enrollees gave Aspenglen and Glacier Basin campgrounds a makeover by first taking measures to protect the “natural growth” that surrounded the areas. They did so in 1933 and 1934 with the use of hewn logs and boulders to mark appropriate parking “stubs,” camping spaces, and “strategic areas.”<sup>199</sup> Several years later, in 1936 and 1937, they constructed new brick fireplaces and table and bench combinations, all included in the Meineke plan to codify campground behavior. The table and bench sets weathered quickly and often needed to be replaced; NP-4 veteran Dean McMurphy remembered that, “We built hundreds of them – and we built them darn good.”<sup>200</sup>

The Park also began accommodating the growing numbers of tourists with automobile campers.<sup>201</sup> Using the same design as the car parking lots, enrollees outlined and built “stubs” for the campers that continued to streamline automobile and human traffic. CCC labor worked in later years to install new water and comfort stations in the campgrounds. These plans worked and the camping population in the Park increased almost every year. In 1938, the last year that the superintendent reported a camping population, the number of campground users had reached almost 40,000.<sup>202</sup> The previous year, E.P. Meinecke visited the Park to inspect the work – no record suggests that he found the results of CCC labor anything other than satisfactory.

Many of the campers in the Park came specifically to fish in the cold lakes and rivers. Although National Park regulations prohibited the hunting of larger mammals, Rocky Mountain and other Parks considered fishing to be fair game.<sup>203</sup> Park administration implemented a “stocking policy” in 1931 in collaboration with the United States Bureau of Fisheries to fill the waters with various trout species.<sup>204</sup> In the 1930s, the CCC enrollees were the driving force behind this successful fish stocking policy, and their administrators impressed upon them the importance of this work. Robert Rowe, a supervisor for camp NP-4, explained to the enrollees that “in the days B.C. (before conservation),” fishermen were depleting Park waters because their catches were unregulated. Because of the recent stocking policy and CCC manpower, however, Rowe explained that this was all to change – the enrollee was to become “Mr. Fisherman’s boy.”<sup>205</sup> Now those coming to the Park to sample the fishing would never leave with an empty bucket, which would increase the popularity of the Park.

The CCC enrollees aided in the Park’s fish stocking efforts by constructing fish rearing ponds. There were four in total; one in Horseshoe Park, one near Camp NP-4-C in Hollowell Park, one above the Endovalley campground, and one near Grand Lake on the western side of the divide. Enrollees first cleared the sites of trees stumps and “forest floor litter” before

---

<sup>199</sup> SAR, 1933, 6; SAR, 1934, 5.

<sup>200</sup> Dan Campbell, “Low Pay and Hard Work Remain as Golden Memories for CCCers,” *Estes Park Trail*, 2 September 1983, p. 7.

<sup>201</sup> SAR, 1937, 10. For a history of automobile trailers and travel in the thirties, see chapter one in Thomas M. Heaney, “‘The Call of the Open Road’: Automobile Travel and Vacations in American Popular Culture, 1935-1960” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Irvine, 2000), 13-66. s

<sup>202</sup> SAR, 1938, 15.

<sup>203</sup> Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 80; C.W. Buchholtz, *Rocky Mountain National Park: A History* (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1983), 157.

<sup>204</sup> SAR, 1935, 8.

<sup>205</sup> Robert Rowe, “Conservation,” *The Estes Sentinel*, Camp NP-4-C, Company 1812, 18 March 1935, p. 1.

building the ponds, which were roughly 210 feet in length, 100 feet in width, and ten feet in depth at the deepest point.<sup>206</sup> Once they excavated a pond, a crew of about thirty-five enrollees constructed a concrete “kettle” over a clay dike to hold water that was piped underground from an intake dam.<sup>207</sup> When they completed a pond, the enrollees collected trout fingerlings from the Estes Park hatchery and deposited them in the retaining ponds.<sup>208</sup> The fry remained there until they grew to legal size; the enrollees then collected them in insulated backpacks and hiked to lakes and rivers to release the trout.<sup>209</sup>

In the winter season, when frigid temperatures slowed tourism, administrators focused on developing the interior lands for winter sports. Park officials knew that the region’s annual snowfall and freezing temperatures provided ample opportunity for skiing, skating, sledding, and snowshoe treks, and they wanted to capitalize on the popularity of these activities. The local community of Estes Park, whose tourism industry suffered in the winter months, increased the pressure to create winter sports facilities. Lodges in the Park already catered to winter sports enthusiasts, and local groups used those accommodations for downhill and cross-country skiing trips. Although these groups put pressure on the Park to construct more modern facilities such as a ski-lift, no building development took place until after World War II.<sup>210</sup> In the meantime, the *Estes Park Trail* gave “orchids to the National Park Service” for using enrollee labor to prepare the ski trails for tournaments and meets held in the Park each winter.<sup>211</sup> The enrollees, who mostly cleared roads and trails of branches and debris and parked cars at ski recreation areas, allowed for continual access to the interior areas in the winter months.

Besides providing for greater use and development of the Park, the CCC also aided in the Park’s budding educational program. Educational programs developed in response to the Park’s growing tourism; they were “a definite outgrowth of the demands of visitors for information as to the why and wherefore of the interesting and unusual things encountered along the beaten track or out-of-the-way trail.”<sup>212</sup> Dorr Yeager, the Park’s first full-time naturalist, came to Rocky Mountain in 1931 to implement interpretational programs; that same year, the Park constructed a new museum and information building at headquarters, close to Estes Park.<sup>213</sup> In 1932, the superintendent divided activities of the new “educational department” into three categories: public contact (guided hikes and lectures), museum work, and “miscellaneous.”<sup>214</sup> The program continued to grow and by 1935, Yeager was enlisting the aid of enrollees to man the information booths in the museums.<sup>215</sup> By that time, the Park’s museum collections, which consisted of geologic and taxonomic exhibits and Native American artifacts, were growing

---

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> “Narrative Report, Period Ending October 31, 1935, Camp NP-1-C,” Box 11, “Records of the Branch of Recreation, Land Planning, and State Cooperation,” “Narrative Reports Concerning Abandoned Camps, 1934-1944,” Entry 42, RG 79, NARA II [hereafter cited as narrative reports].

<sup>208</sup> SAR, 1934, 11.

<sup>209</sup> “Narrative Report, Period Ending October 31, 1935, Camp NP-1-C,” narrative reports.

<sup>210</sup> Buchholtz, *Rocky Mountain National Park*, 194.

<sup>211</sup> Editorial, *Estes Park Trail*, 26 February 1937, 4.

<sup>212</sup> Story, *The National Parks*, 14.

<sup>213</sup> SAR, 1931, 6.

<sup>214</sup> SAR, 1932, 2.

<sup>215</sup> SAR, 1935, 2.

beyond the holding capabilities of the headquarters museum. In 1935, the CCC enrollees constructed a “museum, curio shop, and coffee house” at Fall River Pass on Trail Ridge Road, attesting to the growing popularity of automobile tourism in Rocky Mountain.<sup>216</sup> The CCC enrollees helped expand this museum in 1939 by installing toilets and a water system in a forty-foot extension of the building.<sup>217</sup> On a larger scale, enrollees helped turn Moraine Park Lodge, a beautiful two-story rustic building with a stunning view of a glacially-molded park and its moraines, into what would become the Park’s largest museum. Although Public Works employees worked on transforming aspects of the main building, the young men of the CCC reshingled its roof and built the surrounding parking area, nature trails, and amphitheater. They also skillfully constructed an exhibit for the museum that featured a Native American teepee, dog travois, and willow backrest.<sup>218</sup> By the late 1930s, the Park depended on enrollees to man the information desks, give tours of exhibits, and oversee most photographic and darkroom work.

To compliment the growing educational program, the enrollees constructed several amphitheatres in the Park, also based on naturalistic design principles that sought to maximize the surrounding nature features. Amphitheatres gained popularity in many of the national and state parks, but as architect Albert Good noted in his manual for CCC constructions, their design was not applicable to all topographies. Only if a particular landscape had an existing “natural half-bowl” would an outdoor theater be particularly desirable; otherwise, construction would leave the land “disfigured by a scar” that would outweigh the benefit of the educational arena.<sup>219</sup> He also put strong emphasis on sightlines from theater seating, acoustics, and the importance of harmonizing the manmade construction with the immediate environment. The Corps constructed all three of Rocky Mountain’s amphitheatres following these guidelines. In plans for the outdoor theater at Aspenglen campground, for instance, designers clearly positioned the site so as not to disturb the encircling pine stands, and also noted that native, mill-cut logs be used for seats in the 200-person space. Similar to the other two amphitheatres, another “informal” 200-seater at Glacier Basin and the spectacular 500-person theater adjacent to Moraine Park Museum, Aspenglen plans contained specific designs for a removable plywood viewing screen and a bonfire pit to provide light (and a true camping experience) to night talks held outdoors.<sup>220</sup> The amphitheatres were popular among visitors; campers and tourists in the Park could attend talks and films on subjects such as “Geologic Oddities,” “Mountaineering in the Rockies,” and “Playing Host to Wild Animals.”<sup>221</sup>

---

<sup>216</sup> “Construction Begins on Museum Shop On Divide,” *Estes Park Trail*, 11 October 1935, p. 1.

<sup>217</sup> SAR, 1938, 18.

<sup>218</sup> SMR, March 1935, RMNPHC, 5.

<sup>219</sup> Albert H. Good, *Park and Recreation Structures: Part II, Recreational and Cultural Facilities* (Washington D.C.: Department of the Interior, 1938), 198, National Park Service, Denver Service Center, Technical Information Center.

<sup>220</sup> “Campfire and Lecture Circle, Aspenglen Campground, Rocky Mountain National Park,” National Park Service, Branch of Plans and Design, Regional Office, Region II, Drawing RM-2502-A, Denver Service Center, Technical Information Center; “New Campground and Amphitheater Planned,” *Estes Park Trail*, 1 July 1938, p. 2. The enrollees built Moraine Park amphitheater in 1935-1936 and Glacier Basin and Aspenglen theaters in 1938. These amphitheatres are still in use at Rocky Mountain and are some of the most visible remainders of the CCC in the Park.

<sup>221</sup> “Free National Park Naturalist Services,” *Estes Park Trail*, 26 July 1940, p. 7; “Free National Park Services, Rocky Mountain National Park,” *Estes Park Trail*, 11 July 1941, p. 6.

The Corps also helped expand the Park by constructing residences for the growing number of Rocky Mountain employees as well as developing the Utility Area and installing other necessary utilities. Undoubtedly the most celebrated of these jobs was the Fall River Ranger Station, barn, and garage, constructed by enrollees from NP-4 in the winter of 1934 and 1935. Built to house Ranger Jack Moomaw, the house is a premier example of Park Rustic: the materials, from the hewn logs and foundational stones, are native, the low-pitch roof is wooden shake, and every elevation is balanced in form.<sup>222</sup> Superintendent Rogers noted that once the buildings were completed they would be “one of the best developed units in the Park.”<sup>223</sup> Later, in a two-year span between 1938 and 1940, enrollees constructed residences 8, 9, 10, and 11 (later 45, 46, 47, and 48) in the Utility Area using the same aesthetic principles.<sup>224</sup> Even when constructing new checking kiosks, as enrollees did in 1937 for the Bear Lake, Grand Lake, Fall River, and Wild Basin entrances, or making wooden directional signs for the whole of the Park, the plans followed guidelines of Park Rustic.<sup>225</sup>

The Utility Area was also a beneficiary of CCC funds and labor. Plans to expand the site were already underway by 1933, but enrollees helped to push development at a rapid speed. By the end of the CCC program in 1942, enrollees had completed everything from graveling and grading the area, refurbishing preexisting storage sheds and the ranger dormitory, building a powder house to store ammunition, landscaping the area with native flora, lowering the machine shop, and reconstructing the water and sewer lines in 1940 to accommodate all of the new storage sheds, shops, and residences.<sup>226</sup> Work crews also supplied the rest of the Park with necessary utilities, such as water and sewer systems at all of the campgrounds and locations such as Fall River Pass. The most grueling of these projects were the many miles of telephone line that needed to be installed, both above and below ground. In 1941, for example, enrollees completed a one-year project of installing an underground trans-mountain telephone line system along Trail Ridge Road.<sup>227</sup>

Although CCC efforts to expand accessibility to interior lands and to aid in recreational and educational efforts were always mindful of naturalistic design guidelines, some of their work focused solely on creating a particular aesthetic in the Park. Because of years of human use and misguided Park policies, scars remained on the land that administrators wanted to remove from the views of incoming tourists. Rocky Mountain sought to offer a true wilderness and CCC crews worked endlessly to carry out these principles of façade management. They did so by obliterating old roads and buildings no longer in use, seeding and sodding the cut slopes of

---

<sup>222</sup> For a complete description of the building plans of the Fall River Ranger Station, see “Specifications for a Ranger Station, Rocky Mountain National Park,” narrative reports. For a study of other Rustic designs, see Linda McLelland, *Building the National Parks*, esp. 434-435.

<sup>223</sup> SMR, January 1935, p. 1.

<sup>224</sup> SMR, December 1938, October 1940; for landscape plans of Residence 8, see Drawing NP-RM 2080-B, “Landscape Plan, Residence 45, Residential Area, Rocky Mountain National Park,” Technical Information Center, Denver, Colorado.

<sup>225</sup> Drawing NP-RM 8502, “Checking Stations for Bear Lake, Grand Lake, and Fall River Park Entrances, Rocky Mountain National Park,” Technical Information Center, Denver, Colorado.

<sup>226</sup> SMR, December 1940, p. 2. For the 1941 master plan of the Utility Area, see Drawing NP-RM 3054-F, “Utility Building, Utility Area, Rocky Mountain National Park,” Technical Information Center, Denver, Colorado.

<sup>227</sup> SMR, November 1941.

newly constructed roads, eradicating nonnative plant species, and landscaping visible areas along roads and trails.

As the boundaries of the Park expanded with the acquisition of new lands, Park entrance roads changed course. Also, the course of older roads was often diverted to eliminate severe grades and dangerous switchbacks. Park administrators considered the old roads blights on the landscape and employed CCC crews to alleviate the scarring. One major project was to obliterate parts of the old Fall River Road, the scenic precursor to the wildly popular Trail Ridge Road. Trail Ridge Road's construction and subsequent opening in 1932 rendered Fall River Road largely obsolete. But, parts of Fall River remained visible and officials agreed that it detracted from tourist views of the stunning landscape from Trail Ridge Road. Crews from NP-7 on the western side of the Park and NP-4 on the eastern side began obliterating the old road in 1935 by removing material from fill-slopes of the road to restore the contour of the landscape as much as possible. Enrollees then haphazardly placed logs on the obliterated area to "make it conform more closely with the surrounding timbered country." They replanted the area with native grasses and shrubs to complete the transformation.<sup>228</sup> Crews from NP-1 used the same methods to cover up sections of High Drive, an early entrance road into the eastern side of the Park.<sup>229</sup> Park officials also wasted no time employing enrollees to buildings that were considered unnecessary and a detriment to the aesthetic beauty of the Park. In September of 1933, work crews destroyed several outbuildings of the Moraine Park Lodge, for instance, and gave the material away to locals as firewood.<sup>230</sup> The next month the superintendent reported that, "similar work was carried on at the old Hondius Homestead on the Beaver."<sup>231</sup>

Enrollees spent many hours collecting seeds of native flora to plant on obliterated roads and for landscaping work around employee housing and administrative buildings. While providing erosion control on Bear Lake Road the young men planted aspen, birch, pine, and spruce trees as well as wild sage, juniper, and native grasses to stabilize the cut slopes and cover construction scars.<sup>232</sup> Crews also foraged in the forests for seeds such as penstemon, tarweed, fireweed, Scotch thistle, chokecherry, elderberry, mountain ash, and timothy grass to use in other obliteration and landscaping projects. Sometimes, as in the case of NP-4, enrollees constructed a "transplant bed area" near their camps to cultivate the native species.<sup>233</sup> Beyond small landscaping projects, the enrollees participated in a wide-scale Park effort to replant large areas, such as parts of Aspenglen and Beaver Meadows, which had been traumatized by grazing and logging in previous decades.<sup>234</sup>

---

<sup>228</sup> "Narrative Report, Camp NP-7-C, Fifth E.C.W. Period," narrative reports.

<sup>229</sup> "Narrative Report for Period Ending September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1934, for Horseshoe Camp NP-1-C, Estes Park, Colorado, in Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado," narrative reports.

<sup>230</sup> SMR, August 1933, p. 8.

<sup>231</sup> SMR, September 1933, p. 6.

<sup>232</sup> "Rocky Mountain National Park, Narrative Report, NP-4-C," "Narrative Report for Period Ending September 30, 1935," narrative reports.

<sup>233</sup> William B. Butler, "The Historic Archeology of Rocky Mountain National Park," report on file at the Rocky Mountain National Park and Colorado State Historic Preservation Office, Denver, 2005, p. 11.

<sup>234</sup> McLelland, *Building the National Parks*, 263. Park administration began range revegetation at Aspenglen in 1930 and used CCC labor to carry on the project beginning in 1933.

Covering bald patches of scarred land was imperative for the Park's aesthetic appearance, but administrators also monitored lower altitude ranges for the sake of populating them with the park visitor's favorite four-legged species: the elk. In the early twentieth century, elk populations became scarce because of unregulated hunting and by 1913 early Park boosters were transplanting additional herds from Yellowstone National Park.<sup>235</sup> After the Park's official formation, Rocky Mountain administrators acted similarly to those of other national parks by expending energy in the twenties to increase "popular" mammals in parklands and to exterminate many of those predators who posed a potential threat to vacationers.<sup>236</sup> Even in the 1930s, the superintendent complained when, despite the presence of authorized trappers outside of Park boundaries, predator populations such as coyote were on the rise.<sup>237</sup> Employees protected and studied elk herds, however, because of their ability to draw crowds. They knew well that their consumers demanded "animal stories, and more animal stories."<sup>238</sup> CCC crews aided in this effort by spending many hours "on important ranges" picking foxtail grass by hand, a species of plant that was harmful to the elk herds that grazed upon it. Enrollees also established fenced "quadrants" for the study of range growth and vegetation.<sup>239</sup> Only later, when elk populations swelled and outgrew the available food sources, did administrators curb their policies of consciously encouraging elk numbers and extinguishing predators.<sup>240</sup>

The most tireless efforts to conserve the Park's wild appearance were in CCC protection projects to rid the Park of beetle infestations and to clear the lands of fire hazards. Concerns about the Black Hills beetle, an insect that could wipe out large stands of pine by boring into the bark and laying eggs, began in the 1920s. Lacking funds, however, Park administrators could not focus on combating what they considered a serious menace until CCC appropriations became available. Spraying infested trees with insecticide was one method of eradicating beetles, but normally enrollee crews felled all trees in an infected area. They then stripped the logs of their bark to expose the beetles and their larva and thus killing the host tree with its parasites.<sup>241</sup> Beetle infestation work was such a large part of enrollee labor that Battell Loomis, an inspector working with the enrollees, noted that, in an effort to fight "forest cooties," his work gang "peeled nearly a thousand trees in that time and cut twelve hundred more."<sup>242</sup> Loomis was not exaggerating; by 1938, CCC work crews had battled the Black Hills beetle on over 37,315 acres of land.<sup>243</sup> Despite criticism from biologists that the beetle control policy was overzealous and harmful to the surrounding ecosystem, Park Service officials continued the work until CCC resources were discontinued.<sup>244</sup>

---

<sup>235</sup> Buchholtz, *Rocky Mountain National Park*, 106, 130; Lloyd K. Musselman, *Rocky Mountain National Park, Administrative History, 1915-1965* (Department of the Interior: National Park Service, 1971), 127.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, 157; Sellars, *Preserving Nature*, 24.

<sup>237</sup> SAR, 1936, 4.

<sup>238</sup> Story, *The National Parks*, 18.

<sup>239</sup> "Narrative Report for Period Ending September 30, 1934, Horseshoe Camp NP-1-C," p. 1, narrative reports.

<sup>240</sup> See also Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1949).

<sup>241</sup> "Rocky Mountain National Park, Narrative Report, Period Ending October 31, 1935, Camp NP-1-C," narrative reports.

<sup>242</sup> Battell Loomis, "The Fight for the Forests," *Liberty* (20 April 1934), 41.

<sup>243</sup> "Work of CCC Great Benefit to Park," *Estes Park Trail*, 22 April 1938, p. 14.

<sup>244</sup> Sellars, *Preserving Nature*, 131.

Fire was the more serious threat to a beautiful green Park. Administrators were virtually obsessed with eliminating fire hazards in every inch of the Park and streamlining procedures to combat any blaze that might arise from human or natural causes. At that time, the National Park Service borrowed their fire policy from the Forest Service, whose administrators wholly embraced full fire suppression instead of a controlled burning plan.<sup>245</sup> In Rocky Mountain, enrollees labored tirelessly to clear forest floors and roadsides of branches and snags, leaving Loomis to humorously remark that workers “joined the CCC with the idea that we were going to plant trees. ‘Plant trees, hell! You’re here to chop ‘em down!’”<sup>246</sup> Crews also built several fire or truck trails, clearing lanes through timber to allow for the speedy arrival of firefighters if a blaze alighted in interior lands. Despite administrators’ preoccupation with aesthetics and against the wishes of some national park advocates who felt this fire suppression tactic to be a destroyer of the forests, they ordered the fire trails constructed without concern for the inevitable scars they would leave on the landscape. The Park Service’s fear of forest destruction certainly led some to accuse them of overprotection.<sup>247</sup>

The enrollees, like all Park employees, often went through a fire-training program. Enrollees from NP-12 completed a mandatory, daylong fire program in 1941. Ranger Bert McLaren, camp project superintendent William James, and three foremen familiarized the enrollees with the Park fire control plan, fire safety, fire tool caches, the proper way to load and unload trucks when rushing to a blaze, and methods of fire line construction.<sup>248</sup> Two years earlier, Park foresters had held another typical “fire school” at camps NP-4 and NP-11. The enrollees learned fire-fighting techniques of “the ‘progressive’ method, an improved means of fighting forest flames over the ‘one-lick’ system used last year.”<sup>249</sup> Although it is unclear what the “progressive” method actually was, CCC crews were adept at fighting fires when they did arise. In 1939 alone, enrollees fought four different fires in Park and surrounding Forest Service lands. Administrators lauded the young men for their technical acumen and credited the mandatory fire schools for teaching them necessary skills.<sup>250</sup> Interestingly, however, Loomis noted that Park technical supervisors themselves did not always prove to be conscientious role models. “Smoking while working in the forest is forbidden,” he explains, “but how to smoke safely in the woods is, very sensibly, taught by all the foremen, acting on their own responsibility. Men will smoke anyway, and it is the hastily hidden cigarette that may smolder and start a fire.”<sup>251</sup>

Park rangers often recruited enrollees to do dangerous work, not only fighting fires but also to create search and rescue groups for missing hikers and climbers. Every year brought accidents similar to that of L.M. Thomas, Jr., who had fallen from the east face of Longs Peak while scaling the summit. Enrollees accompanied rangers on a search and rescue group and

---

<sup>245</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>246</sup> Loomis, “The Fight for the Forests,” 40.

<sup>247</sup> Sellars, *Preserving Nature*, 129.

<sup>248</sup> William C. James, “Fire School Report,” 4 August 1941, Box 18, Region II (Midwest Region), Omaha, Nebraska, Records Pertaining to Recreation, Use, and State Cooperation – Central Classified Files, 1936-1952, RG 79, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Central Plains Region, Kansas City, Missouri.

<sup>249</sup> “Fire School Held at CCC Camps,” *Estes Park Trail*, 3 May 1940, p. 8.

<sup>250</sup> “Fire Fighters Control Flames in Nat’l Park,” *Estes Park Trail*, 16 June 1939, p. 1.

<sup>251</sup> Loomis, “The Fight for the Forests,” 40.

carried the man from the Boulder Field shelter cabin to the foot of the Longs Peak trail.<sup>252</sup> Not all of those who went missing were lucky enough to survive; enrollees often had to locate the bodies of those who had fallen or happened upon some other mishap while recreating in the Park. Whatever the mission, the young men put themselves in danger while searching for victims. Because of this, *Trail* writers were quick to praise the enrollees for their ability in the face of perilous work:

It is appropriate at this time to pay tribute to those CCC men. After all, it is they who go through the actual ordeal of the search, they are the men who get down to the grueling, tiring job of looking in the ravines, behind rocky ledges, who do the physically fatiguing work and labor under the racking tension of looking for a man who is lost and injured, perhaps dead. And it is they who carry the man once he is found. From the rangers themselves come praises for the thorough-going manner in which these CCC men conduct a search. And also from the rangers come fervent thanks that there are CCC camps, because a searching party can be organized in the shortest possible time.<sup>253</sup>

CCC enrollees not only worked to develop and protect Rocky Mountain and its visitors, they also labored on lands belonging to other federal agencies. It was not uncommon for the Park superintendent to lend work crews to the nearby Roosevelt National Forest, for example, for beetle eradication work or fire control. Two of the biggest contracted jobs took place when construction began in the late 1930s and early 1940s on the Colorado-Big Thompson water diversion project. When the Bureau of Reclamation created their headquarters near Stanley Park in Estes Park and constructed another camp near Shadow Mountain reservoir, CCC crews landscaped the residential areas. On the western side of the Park, administrators requested that camp NP-12 near Grand Lake be created purposefully for work with the Bureau of Reclamation. Enrollees spent most of their days clearing the Shadow Mountain and Granby reservoirs for the new recreation area, taking the lumber back to the sawmill at camp NP-12 to prepare it for Park use.<sup>254</sup>

Park façade management principles remained engrained in Park policy until activists in the environmental movement of the 1960s and 1970s questioned the values of what they considered the corporate culture that underpinned Park management.<sup>255</sup> Aesthetic concerns no doubt remained because tourism continued to increase in the late 1940s and 1950s. In Rocky Mountain, although automobile visitors declined during the war years, the decades directly after saw another boom in middle-class vacationers looking to experience wilderness. Without the CCC, however, appropriations were scarce and the efficiency of the thirties gave way to ramshackle trails and neglected facilities. CCC manpower and funds allowed the Park to become an easily consumable space – every work project orbited around presenting the viewer

---

<sup>252</sup> “CCC Campers Carry Man Down Peak Trail,” *Estes Park Trail*, August 24, 1934, p. 1.

<sup>253</sup> Editorial, *Estes Park Trail*, 26 July 1935, p. 4.

<sup>254</sup> “Annual Project History No. 3, Colorado-Big Thompson Project, Colorado, From January 1, 1940 to December 31, 1940,” Denver NARA, RG 115, Box 23, “Records of the Bureau of Reclamation,” “Engineering and Research Center, Project Histories,” Folder “Colorado-Big Thompson 1940, vol. 2 through Colorado-Big Thompson 1941, vol. 3,” Box 23, “Engineering and Research Center, Project Histories,” RG 115, National Archives and Records Administration, Rocky Mountain Region, Denver, Colorado.

<sup>255</sup> Sellars, *Preserving Nature*, 3.



with the most spectacular views the Park had to offer. Without the Corps, façade management policies continued, but the result was not as effective.

Despite Superintendent Canfield's lamentations that surrounding citizens were not conservation-minded, the Corps did help to popularize landscape preservation. In the program's early years, Director Robert Fechner noted that the budding New Deal programs, with their aim to enhance working conditions, were catalysts to create additional working-class leisure time. The CCC, therefore, was crucial to developing parklands for increased use. *Estes Park Trail* writers, who reported on Fechner's address to enrollees at Camp NP-1 in 1934, paraphrased him on this point: "With the shorter week of labor which the speaker predicted would come soon, there will be a demand for more and better places of recreation. The forests and the parks of the nation are going to be used more and more with the added leisure that is coming to the workers. Consequently the work of conserving these parks and forests is of increasing importance."<sup>256</sup> Fechner was ultimately correct; post-war years saw a boom in travel to state and national parks and an increased interest in preserving more land for recreational use. The work of the CCC was successful in familiarizing the general public with concepts of conservation and ways that it benefited the nation.

---

<sup>256</sup> "ECW May Become Permanent American Institution, Fechner Declares; National Director Addresses Men of CCC Camps on Wednesday," *Estes Park Trail*, 13 July 1934, p. 1, 10.

## CHAPTER 4

### CONCLUSIONS

World War II brought the final blow to the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1942. The program had actually weakened long before wartime; in 1937, although Roosevelt made the Civilian Conservation Corps a separate agency from other relief programs, he also agreed to major cutbacks in personnel and funding. Efforts to make the CCC a permanent organization failed twice in the next several years, and Roosevelt took away its status as a separate agency when he consolidated all federal relief programs in the Reorganization Act of 1939. Camps and camp personnel suffered irrevocable losses.<sup>257</sup>

Furthermore, in the years before the war, the Roosevelt administration began to use the Corps for defense training purposes, signifying obsolescence for the program's original purposes as a relief measure. James McEntee, the CCC director after Robert Fechner's death in 1939, and Army officials enacted a plan in 1940 for training in noncombative skills such as cooking, first aid, demolition, and radio operation.<sup>258</sup> Rocky Mountain National Park, like other parks, took part in this effort. In 1941 at Camp NP-11, for example, W.P.A. instructors were conducting classes in carpentry, electrical operations, and radio.<sup>259</sup> The *Estes Park Trail* also reported that the Red Cross was conducting first aid classes in the only remaining Park camps, NP-11 on the eastern side and NP-12 near Grand Lake.<sup>260</sup>

Severe shortages in enrollment also plagued the Corps in its later years. Plentiful jobs in the defense industry offered increased earnings and more freedom, and the low pay and strictly supervised nature of the Corps was simply no match for new labor opportunities. Although the CCC had, in later years, tried to outgrow its role as a relief program and include those not in need of subsistence, it still drew volunteers from the lower classes. It had not been able to "shake off the relief stamp" when Congress ultimately decided the CCC had run its course in 1942.<sup>261</sup> By then, many young men were drafted into the service. For the men who did go on to serve in the military, the CCC had provided a regimented existence that they would soon relive in training camps. Dean McMurphy recalled his time at NP-4 as "good conditioning for the Army."<sup>262</sup> Many other CCC veterans shared this sentiment.

Park work programs suffered because of the weakening and subsequent abolishment of the Corps. Park superintendent David Canfield lamented in 1941 that, "due to the booming

---

<sup>257</sup> John C. Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps and The National Park Service, 1933-1942* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1985), 23-28.

<sup>258</sup> John A. Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1967), 197.

<sup>259</sup> "CCC Camp Educational Report," 25 January 1941, Box 38, Entry 115, "Division of Investigations," "Camp Inspection Reports, 1933-1942," RG 35, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) II, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>260</sup> "CCC Enrollees Being Trained for Emergency," *Estes Park Trail*, 26 December 1941, p. 1.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*, 219.

<sup>262</sup> Dan Campbell, "Low Pay and Hard Work Remain as Golden Memories for CCCers," *Estes Park Trail*, 2 September 1983, p. 7.

defense industries, enlistment in the federal armed forces, and improvement of labor conditions in general, camps were not up to full strength, retarding the volume of work accomplished in previous years.”<sup>263</sup> During the war years, the curtailment in manpower was not conspicuous because tourism suffered as well – gas rationing and travel anxieties reduced visitors by sixty-seven percent in 1943 and 1944. After the victories in Japan and Europe, tourism again boomed. Personnel increases and funding, however, did not, and park facilities suffered from over-use and negligent maintenance.<sup>264</sup> Parks across the country experienced similar crises in funding; the problem worsened until, in 1956, the National Park Service enacted its Mission 66 program to reinvigorate the parks system. The plan allotted one billion dollars to parks nationwide, nine million of which went to Rocky Mountain National Park for improvements.<sup>265</sup>

The only camp to physically remain in the Park for some years after the program’s abolishment was NP-4, whose buildings stood in Hollowell Park until the 1950s. Three of the barracks from that camp are now employee housing units on Ptarmigan Lane. Park staff razed all other camps and used the salvaged material for firewood, reused the buildings for storage, or transferred the property to other governmental institutions. The Park and Forest Services sought structures from camps NP-11 and NP-12 in particular because of their prefabricated material. In all cases, the land of the former campsites is now recovering from the scars of nine years of habitation.

Popular memory has been kind to the CCC. Praise from its veterans is continual and even today programs like AmeriCorps try to recapture its spirit. The sources left behind concerning the Corps, however, paint a more complex picture of the program. There were enrollee desertions, indifferent administrators, bureaucratic battles, and discriminative circumstances for certain groups. But no matter how it is remembered, or if it is remembered at all, the CCC had an enormous impact on Rocky Mountain National Park and on national and state parks everywhere. By providing almost limitless manpower, the Corps allowed the Park’s landscape architects and engineers to breath life into their vision for the Park as a viable recreational space. Enrollees transformed rustic campgrounds into modern ones, constructed and rebuilt trails to incorporate easier grades and more beautiful vistas, bolstered the educational program with new museums and amphitheatres, and provided necessary maintenance, construction, and landscaping. Without the CCC, the Park would have been severely handicapped in its ability to cater to a booming tourist population. In the same vein, conserving scenic resources might have never become as popular as it did in post-war years. The sheer dynamism, then, of the depression years in the Park can be attributed to changes fueled by the CCC. For these reasons, the Corps has a crucial place in the larger narrative of the history of Rocky Mountain National Park. To understand the Park today, one must understand the importance of the Civilian Conservation Corps.

---

<sup>263</sup> Superintendent’s Annual Report, 1941, Rocky Mountain National Park Historical Collection, 14.

<sup>264</sup> C.W. Buchholtz, *Rocky Mountain National Park: A History* (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1983), 193-195.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, 202.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Thesis:

Brock, Julia, "Creating Consumers: The Civilian Conservation Corps in Rocky Mountain National Park". Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Department of History, Florida State University, Tallahassee, 2005.

### Primary Sources:

#### Documents

National Archives II, College Park, Maryland

RG 35 Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps

Entry 32 State Procedural Records

Entry 115 Camp Inspection Reports, 1933-1942

RG 79 Records of the National Park Service

Entry 65

National Archives, Rocky Mountain Region, Denver, Colorado

RG 79 Records of the National Park Service

Box 28, Rocky Mountain National Park, Estes Park, Colorado, General Correspondence Files, 1918-1954

National Archives, Central Plains Region, Kansas City, Kansas

RG 79 Records of the National Park Service

Box 18, Records of the National Park Service, Region II (Midwest Region), Omaha, Nebraska, Records Pertaining to Recreation, Use, and State Cooperation – Central Classified Files, 1936-1952

Technical Information Center, Denver Service Center, National Park Service, Denver, Colorado

Grosvenor Atterbury. "Notes on the Architectural and Other Esthetic Problems Involved in the Development of Our Great National Parks." August and September 1929.

Albert H. Good. *Park and Recreation Structures: Part II, Recreational and Cultural Facilities*. Washington D.C.: Department of the Interior, 1938.

Branch of Plans and Design, Regional Office, Region II

Drawing RM-2502-A, Campfire and Lecture Circle, Aspenglen Campground, Rocky Mountain National Park

Drawing NP-RM 2080-B, Landscape Plan, Residence 45, Residential Area, Rocky Mountain National Park

Drawing NP-RM 8502, Checking Stations for Bear Lake, Grand Lake, and Fall River Park Entrances, Rocky Mountain National Park

Drawing NP-RM 3054-F, Utility Building, Utility Area, Rocky Mountain National Park

University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado  
Archives

Agnes Wright Spring Collection, Pamphlet File

Denver Public Library, Denver, Colorado  
Western History Collection  
George Carlson Papers

Rocky Mountain National Park Historical Collection  
Superintendent Annual Reports

1924  
1930  
1931  
1932  
1933  
1934  
1935  
1936  
1937  
1938  
1942

Superintendent Monthly Reports

May 1933  
June 1933  
August 1933  
September 1933  
January 1935  
March 1935  
June 1935  
December 1938  
March 1940  
June 1940  
October 1940  
December 1940  
November 1941

*Estes Park Trail*

“Army Officer Lauds Park Camp Location.” 5 May 1933, p.1.  
Campbell, Dan. “Low pay and hard work remain as golden memories for CCCers. 2 September 1933, p. 7.  
“CCC Boys Move Into New \$30,000 Camp,” 10 November 1939, p. 1-2.  
“CCC Boys Obtain Work In Private Employment,” 23 October 1936, p. 5.  
“CCC Camp Hosts 250 Guests at Celebration,” 8 April 1938, p. 1.  
“CCC Campers Carry Man Down Peak Trail,” August 24, 1934, p. 1.

“CCC Workers Finish New Section of Trail,” 14 September 1934, p. 7.  
 “Chamber of Commerce Sponsors Show Here for Woodpecker Camp,” 19 May 1933, p. 8.  
 “Construction Begins on Museum Shop On Divide,” 11 October 1935, p. 1.  
 “ECW May Become Permanent American Institution, Fechner Declares; National Director Addresses Men of CCC Camps on Wednesday,” *Estes Park Trail*, 13 July 1934, p. 1, 10.  
 Editorial, 6 July 1934, p. 4.  
 Editorial, 26 July 1935, p. 4.  
 Editorial, 26 February 1937, 4.  
 “Fire Fighters Control Flames in Nat’l Park,” 16 June 1939, p. 1.  
 “Fire School Held at CCC Camps,” 3 May 1940, p. 8.  
 “Free National Park Naturalist Services,” 26 July 1940, p. 7.  
 “Free National Park Services, Rocky Mountain National Park,” 11 July 1941, p. 6.  
 “Giant Negro Fighter, ‘Better Than Louis,’ Seeks Opponent.” 2 August 1935, p. 2.  
 Hutchins, Jackie. “Passage of 44 Years Doesn’t Diminish Fond Memories of Park’s CCC Alumni,” 13 September 1985, p. 13.  
 “Hy Ridges Says CCC Campers are Pampered,” 26 May 1933, p. 6.  
 “Hy Ridges Suggest a Plan for ‘Woodpeckers,’” 12 May 1933, p. 6.  
 “Local CCC Camps Were the First in the West,” *Estes Park Trail*, 26 April 1940, p. 20.  
 “New Campground and Amphitheater Planned,” 1 July 1938, p. 2.  
 “Ninety CCC Men Given Discharge After Strike,” 4 October 1935, p.1.  
 “Officers and Squad of New Army Arrive.” 12 May 1933, p. 1.  
 “Park Plans for Camp of 200 Men in Vicinity,” 21 April 1933, p. 1.  
 “Reforestation Army Men Will Lead Ideal Existence Here,” 19 May 1933, p. 6.  
 “Region Will Supply ‘Overhead’ Personnel in Reforestation Work,” 5 May 1933, p. 1.  
 “Round Town,” 15 November 1935, p. 4.  
 “CCC Workers Have Long List of Achievements in Park,” 17 April 1936, p. 16.  
 “Work of CCC Great Benefit to Park,” 22 April 1938, p. 14.

CCC camp newsletters

*Long’s Peak Echo*  
*Long’s Peak Joker*  
*Long’s Peak Views*  
*Texas Tidbits*  
*The Bay State Sentinel*  
*The Echo*  
*The Estes Sentinel*  
*The Four and One Times*  
*The Hidden Valley Murmurs*

## Books and Articles

Gleyre, L. A. and C. N. Alleger. *History of the Civilian Conservation Corps in Colorado Littleton District-Grand Junction District, Summer 1936*. Denver: Press of the Western Newspaper Union, 1936.

Holland, Kenneth and Frank Ernest Hill. *Youth in the CCC*. Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1942.

Loomis, Battell. "The Fight for the Forests." *Liberty* (20 April 1934), 40-41.

Loomis, Battell. "With the Green Guard." *Liberty* (29 April 1934), 52-53.

Mills, Enos A. *The Rocky Mountain National Park*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1932.

Smith, Alfred E. "Unemployed Youth." *New York Times*. 13 November 1932, p. XX2.

Story, Isabelle F. "National Parks Prepare for Big Season." *New York Times*, 25 April 1937, p. 180.

"The President's Address." *New York Times*. 22 March 1933, p. 2.

## **Secondary Sources:**

Buchholtz, C.W. *Rocky Mountain National Park: A History*. Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1983.

Butler, William B. "The Historic Archaeology of Rocky Mountain National Park." Report on file at the Rocky Mountain National Park and the Colorado State Historic Preservation Office, 2005.

Clancy, Patrick. "Conserving the Youth: The Civilian Conservation Corps Experience in Shenandoah National Park." *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 105, no. 4 (Autumn 1997), 439-472.

Deutsch, Sarah. *No Separate Refuge: Culture, Class, and Gender on an Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Lacy, Leslie Alexander. *The Soil Soldiers: The Civilian Conservation Corps in the Great Depression*. Radnor, Pennsylvania: Chilton Book Company, 1976.

Leopold, Aldo. *A Sand County Almanac*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1949.

Heaney, Thomas M. "'The Call of the Open Road': Automobile Travel and Vacations in American Popular Culture, 1935-1960." Ph.D. diss., University of California, Irvine, 2000.

- Montoya, Maria E. "The Roots of Economic and Ethnic Divisions in Northern New Mexico: The Case of the Civilian Conservation Corps." *The Western Historical Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (Spring, 1995), 14-34.
- Musselman, Lloyd K. *Rocky Mountain National Park, Administrative History, 1915-1965*. Department of the Interior: National Park Service, 1971.
- Nash, Roderick. *Wilderness in the American Mind*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973.
- Olen, Cole. *The African-American Experience in the Civilian Conservation Corps*. Gainesville: The University Press of Florida, 1999.
- Olwig, Kenneth R. "Reinventing Common Nature: Yosemite and Mount Rushmore – A Meandering Tale of Double Nature." In *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995.
- Paige, John C. *The Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Park Service, 1933-1942: An Administrative History*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1985.
- Parham, Robert Bruce. "The Civilian Conservation Corps in Colorado, 1933-1942." Master's thesis, University of Colorado, 1981.
- Ramaley, William C. "Trails and Trailbuilders of RMNP," n.d. RMNPHC.
- Rawick, George P. "The New Deal and Youth: The Civilian Conservation Corps, the National Youth Administration, and the American Youth Congress." Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1957.
- Reiman, Richard A.. *The New Deal and American Youth: Ideas and Ideals in a Depression Decade*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992.
- Salmond, John A. *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1967.
- Sellars, Richard West. *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997.
- Sierra Standish, Cheri Yost, and Bill Butler. "Rocky Mountain National Park MPS (Additional documentation - Trails)," of the Rocky Mountain National Park Multiple Property Documentation form, Colorado State Historic Preservation Office, 2005.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is a pleasure to thank the many people who aided in this project. Credit must first go to the staff of the Rocky Mountain Nature Association, whose sponsorship via the Rocky Mountain Research Fellowship funded by the Justine and Leslie Fidel Bailey Trust. The fellowship funded the research that resulted in my M.A. Thesis and this report. I am equally indebted to Dr. Bill Butler, archaeologist for the Rocky Mountain National Park, who supervised my work and gave me extensive assistance during my stay in the Park. Sybil Barnes, librarian for the Park as well as the Estes Park Public Library, gave assistance throughout my research in Colorado. Other Park employees also provided encouragement and help: Cheri Yost, Leanne Benton, Sierra Standish, and Kevin Pellini.

I am grateful for the invaluable aid provided by skilled archivists at the various repositories I visited. At the National Archives and Records Administration branches, Eugene Morris at NARA II in College Park, Maryland, Tim Rives at the Central Plains Region in Kansas City, Kansas, as well as Eric Bittner and others at the Rocky Mountain Region in Denver, Colorado, all guided me to pertinent material. Scott Pawlowski at the National Park Service's Technical Information Center in Denver also provided access to important CCC plans and blueprints. I also received aid from the courteous staffs of the Colorado State Archives, the Colorado Historical Society, the historical archives at the University of Colorado, Boulder, and the Western History Collection at the Denver Public Library.

At Florida State University, Dr. Frederick Davis headed my thesis committee and offered endless patience, advice, and encouragement. He and my other excellent committee members, Dr. Davis, Dr. V.J. Conner, Dr. Suzanne Sinke, Dr. Olaf Stieglitz, and Dr. Robin Sellers, provided the support and scholarly criticism that improved the paper exponentially and shaped the work into its final form.

Friends and family also gave crucial support. I must express gratitude to my fellow graduate students who lent a sympathetic ear and dispensed valuable guidance; they are too numerous to name but I am indebted to them all. I could not have completed the paper without the help and encouragement of David Nelson, who generously offered his time, knowledge, and scholarly resources throughout the research and writing process. My family showed confidence in my ability when I needed it most. I had the pleasure of my father's company during some of the initial research and the privilege of his insight into the material throughout the writing process. I am grateful for his enduring support.