

**STORIES OF THE CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS
ON THE PAYETTE NATIONAL FOREST**



**INDIAN MOUNTAIN FIRE LOOKOUT
BUILT BY THE CCC'S IN 1933**

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A SHORT HISTORY OF THE CCC

March 31, 1998 marked the 65th anniversary of the day President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Emergency Conservation Work Act (ECWA), creating the program known as the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Roosevelt's plan was to bring together what he thought were two of the nation's wasted resources – young men and the land – in an effort to save both. Participants had to be between the ages of 18 and 25, single and unemployed. They earned \$30 a month, \$25 of which was sent home to family members. This was much better than the wages those that could find work, could get. For those that could find work elsewhere, wages were small, \$18 a week for men, and only \$9 a week for women.

Less than a month after the ECWA was passed into law (April 1933), the first CCC camp was opened on the George Washington National Forest in Virginia. Within three months, there were more than 275,000 enrollees in 1,300 camps all across the United States. There were 517 camps located on National Forests and other federal reservations administered by the Department of Agriculture. At this time, there were 142 National Forests with a combined acreage of more than 163 million acres. These forest were located in thirty-three states, Alaska, and Puerto Rico. The only states without National Forests at that time were, Connecticut, Delaware, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Rhode Island, and Texas. Project sites were located in all 48 states, as well as in Alaska and Puerto Rico. Camps were also located off of National Forests lands. There were 463 camps on state and private lands; 218 on erosion and flood control sites; and other camps operating for the Tennessee Valley Authority, Federal game and bird refuges, mosquito control sites, and the Bureau of Plant Industry (USDA 1983).

Once in the program, the participants had to go through a two-week conditioning period, similar to boot camp, undoubtedly because the program was run under the jurisdiction of the Department of the Army. Once assigned to a camp, CCC members built roads, trails, campgrounds, fought fires and floods, and terraced hillsides to protect them against erosion. A major undertaking was the planting and replanting of forests, which led the CCC to its nickname, "Roosevelt's Tree Army."

Because the original CCC program was only authorized for a six-month period, tents were used in the camps. After legislation was passed to extend the program, portable prefabricated buildings were erected. When work projects were completed, the buildings were disassembled and relocated. These camps usually housed approximately 200 men. In addition to the main camps, spike camps were established in many of the unroaded areas in the west. These were smaller tent camps used on projects that were too far away from the main camp for easy commuting (Dzurainin 1994).

Besides receiving on the job training in the field, enrollees had the opportunity to attend educational classes during the evening. Educational programs varied from camp to camp, depending on the interest of the enrollees and the cooperation of the camp commander. Some camps had separate buildings for classes, and often included a library (Dzurainin 1994).

The CCC on the Payette National Forest

During the CCC era, the present Payette National Forest was known as the Idaho and Weiser Forests. A Payette National Forest existed, however it was where the Boise National Forest now is (Smith 1983:51). In 1933, the Idaho and Weiser Forests, as well as other National Forests, were faced with tight budgets. With the addition of CCC labor, forest managers found themselves with unprecedented numbers of workers for projects (West 1991:1).

In 1933, there were four main CCC camps operating within the Idaho and Weiser Forests and two other camps established near the Forests. Lake Fork Camp (F-51), was established 1½ miles from the town of McCall in early 1933. There were 175 men from Idaho and New Jersey in the camp (Herring 1933 quoted in Dzurainin 1994). Another camp, also called Lake Fork (F-415), operated in the area later on.

Camp F-56 was established on June 3, 1933 on the shore of Goose Lake. On September 30, 1933 there were 180 men from New York in the camp. One of their main projects was the construction of a campground near Goose Lake (Herring 1933a quoted in Dzurainin 1994). At Paddy Flat there was a camp (F-54) with most of its enrollee's from Trenton, New Jersey. On July 8, 1933 they submitted the following letter to the *Trenton Evening News*:

This camp is the first to fall timber in the State of Idaho and could well be called "Trenton's Own Forest Camp." More than 75 percent of the fellows hail from Trenton and the other 25 percent are from other towns in New Jersey and New York. Only a few are from Idaho.

In another letter, published in Trenton's *Sunday Times*, Charles "Chris" Simone wrote that he served five months as an ambulance driver for Company 1262 at Paddy Flat, and that one CCC man was killed by a falling tree (Dzurainin 1944:6).

Camp F-68 was established on June 3, 1933, in Council on the Weiser National Forest. According to a September 30, 1933 inspection report, there were 202 men from New York and New Jersey who were building a warehouse, cleaning 10 miles of road, and controlling rodents on 800 acres (Herring 1933b quoted in Dzurainin 1994). By the end of 1934 all of the permanent buildings at the Council District Administrative Office had been constructed by the CCC. In the late 1960's these buildings were still in use (Hockaday 1968:41) and some continue to be used today.

There was another CCC camp located at Price Valley, and a possible spike camp at the old Hornet Creek Ranger Station. Projects in the area included the construction of dwellings at Price Valley, roads around Price Valley, and a campground at Lost Valley Reservoir. The Price Valley camp was later moved to Mann Creek (Hockaday 1968:37, 41-42).

Two other main camps were established near the Idaho and Weiser National Forests (P-222 and S-221). Camp Sooner Meadows, P-222, was established in October of 1933 near New Meadows. The "P" designates that the bulk of the work was to be accomplished on private land, the "S" designated state lands. A 1933 inspection reports noted that there were 178 men from New York, New Jersey, and Idaho at this camp. They were working on constructing 30 miles of roads and controlling rodents on approximately 800 acres. The other camp was established near Tamarack, and named the Round Valley Camp, S-221, on June 3, 1933. In October there were 188 men from New York, New Jersey, and Idaho at this camp (Herring 1933c and 1933d quoted in Dzurainin 1994).

Other camps were established later. On May 1, 1934, Company 1311 moved the camp at Goose Lake and established Camp Thorn Creek (F-56). The State of Idaho also sponsored a camp (S-223) in McCall on June 2, 1933. Many of the buildings now used by the McCall Ranger District were built by the men in this camp. Camps and spike camps were also established at French Creek, Warren, Cambridge, West Pine in the Weiser National Forest, Brownlee, Camp Creek along the South Fork of the Salmon River, Burgdorf, Black Lee Flat, and at Lake Fork.

Stories of the CCC

The following stories of the CCC are told by the men who actually experienced it. These stories have come to us through oral interviews and written text. Most of the excerpts are in the words of the individuals, with only minor editing. This lends to the character of the memories. All of the individuals included in these sections are men who worked with the CCC in the area which now contains the Payette National Forest.

A.E. BRIGGS (from memoirs of a United States Forest Ranger)

There were five companies of 200 enrollees each of the Civilian Conservation Corps program allotted to the Idaho National Forest during the summer of 1933. The Warren District had two companies, or two camps fully staffed with Forest Service and Army overhead men. The Army overhead consisted of a captain, a lieutenant, and a doctor for each company of enrollees. The Forest Service or work agency overhead consisted of a project superintendent, a crew foreman for each 24 enrollees, and the District Ranger. Blacksmiths and equipment repair men were employed for each camp

French Creek Camps

Two camps were established side by side at the mouth of French Creek on the main Salmon River. The work project was construction of a road along the Salmon River from a point about mid-way between Riggins, Idaho, and the camps at French Creek. The work involved was dangerous, difficult, and expensive for experienced workmen, and much more difficult and dangerous for inexperienced youngsters from the big cities in the east, who had never used an ax or shovel, or operated heavy road building equipment.

Here was a training job of great magnitude. Youngsters had to be carefully selected and trained as truck drivers. The only access road to the camps was over Fall Creek Summit which had several miles of steep, narrow, and winding switch-back trails leading into French Creek Canyon. It was a dangerous road for skilled and experienced truck drivers. The road construction required the use of air compressors and jack hammers for drilling holes in solid granite ledges, and the use of many tons of high explosives per month for blasting purposes. Perpendicular ledges of solid granite had to be stripped of loose rock before work started below in order to protect the workers blasting the road way. Strippers were suspended on ropes from ten to a hundred feet above the road location. Men had to be trained to operate huge tractor-bulldozers to move blasted rock of the roadway. A slight error in operating the big tractors would have plunged the big machine and operator over the ledge and into the Salmon River.

Our first impression after sizing up the youngsters who had to be trained to handle the trucks, huge tractors and other equipment was that it would be an impossible task within reasonable safety and time limits. But these were the orders handed down from the higher authorities who, it would appear, had little conception of the dangers involved.

We were told by Army officers who had accompanied the enrollees from the east that most of the youngsters had come from the slum areas in the big cities and many were repeater offenders in the juvenile courts. As we continued to work with the boys, we found many of them had come from broken homes, or no homes at all, and had been "kicked around" without much, if any, encouragement or kind treatment from anyone. Most of them gradually responded to encouragement, decent treatment, and patience, but there were a few

incorrigibles who failed to respond. Because of their continued efforts and activities to agitate and even incite groups of other enrollees, it became necessary, after concerted efforts to change their attitude, to issue them dishonorable discharges and remove them from the camps.

They were a noisy group of youngsters. They had developed the habit of shouting at the top of their voices when talking with each other. This was very annoying to anyone not accustomed to it. In the mountain and timbered areas, and especially on dangerous work projects, a loud shout or yell typically signaled an accident or other trouble. One day when the noise seemed almost unbearable, I asked one of the Army officers why the boys found it necessary to make so much noise. He inquired if I had ever lived in New York or other large city where the deafening noise from the elevated railways and other sources made it necessary to yell loudly to be heard above the noise.

At the time the CCC camp was established at French Creek, we were instructed to use the enrollees for fire suppression work. I questioned the use of enrollees on this type of work unless adequate overhead could be provided because of the dangers involved in using inexperienced youths from the big cities to suppress fires in the rough, heavily timbered areas without training in the use of tools.

CCC Crews and Fire fighting

The first major fire occurred on the Warren District after the CCC camps were established. Two hundred enrollees with a foreman in charge of each twenty-four boys were sent to the fire. Then my real troubles began. The boys were inexperienced in the use of an ax, shovel, pulaski tool, and cross-cut saw. They wore leather soled shoes which became very slick on the steep, grassy slopes, and it was impossible for them to hold their footing. After a few hours on the fire line, there were many injuries from contact with the razor sharp tools, some of them were deep gashes.

The Forest Service provided the food to fire crews and there was always a plentiful supply of various kinds for well balanced meals. After the boys had subsisted on near starvation rations in the CCC camps, and found that in the fire camps there were no limits, dozens of them overloaded themselves, with many resulting upset stomachs. At the end of the first day on the fire line, more than half of the crew were incapacitated from tool accidents and belly aches and it was necessary to send them back to the base camp. The futility of efforts to suppress fires with this type of help was clearly obvious. I issued orders against replacing the sick men with other enrollees. I requested replacements of local experienced men. This caused a great furor among the high ranking army officers, and one or two forest officers, who had apparently failed to recognize the futility of trying to suppress fires in rough, heavily timbered areas with inexperienced boys. It was indicated that I would be subjected to an investigation and a hearing because of my refusal to use enrollees in fire suppression. The furor subsided after a preliminary investigation on the ground.

The fire was stopped by experienced man after it had covered some two thousand acres of heavy timber.

In organizing the enrollees into groups for assigned jobs on the fire line during the first day on the fire, six husky boys were detailed to carry water to the fire fighters along the line. A trail was blazed to a spring on the mountainside above the fire front. The carriers were furnished 5-gallon canvas manpack water bags with shoulder straps. They were accompanied on one or two trips to the spring by a foreman and instructed to use the spring as the source of water supply. It was a long climb from the fire line to the spring, but when loaded with water, the travel was downgrade. Carey Creek was located in an inaccessible box canyon below the fire front, and waterfalls could be clearly heard from the fire line. The water carriers could hear the water and requested permission from several of the foremen to be allowed to fill their water bags from the creek to avoid climbing the hill to the spring. The foremen refused permission to go into the canyon and explained that it was a box canyon and inaccessible and that they would have a hard time finding their way through the ledges. They were also told that it would be impossible to make their way out of the canyon with five gallons of water on their backs. I had made several trips along the fire line during the day and the carriers had asked about permission to go into the canyon for water. Each time I had also warned them to stay out of the canyon and explained why. However, the waterfalls sounded much closer than they were and the carriers were unconvinced that the creek was not the easiest and best source of water.

Along in the afternoon, the men on the fire line began to ask for water. No water was available. The foremen managed to keep the men working until the end of the day. They felt quite certain the water carriers had become tired and had returned to the fire camp. The crews returned to the fire camp about sundown and the men were counted. The six water carriers were missing. I returned to the camp after darkness had set in and was told about the missing boys. The fire had made a fast run in the canyon bottom during the afternoon. There was excitement and concern about the missing boys and search parties were organized to start the search during the night. I immediately ruled against sending men into the rough canyon and explained that it would be foolhardy and very dangerous for searchers to enter the canyon in the darkness, this would almost surely result in the loss of additional men through serious or fatal injuries. The excitement subsided when I agreed to head a search party into the canyon at daylight the next morning.

At daylight, I started the search with six selected men. The ashes were still pretty hot among the ledges as we made our way into the canyon. In a steep draw leading into the main canyon between ledges, we found the charred remains of two water bags. After finding these, we expected to find the remains of some of the boys. After a thorough search of the areas surrounding the steep draw, we proceeded to the bottom of the canyon to a main trail. We found footprints of several men in the dust leading down the canyon. Large spruce trees located in swampy places in the canyon bottom had not burned. We felt

more relaxed and knew there was a good possibility the boys had made their way into the canyon and were safe.

We followed the footprints on the trail several miles to the Salmon River. The tracks led to a cable way across the river, and no tracks led away from it, so we concluded the boys had crossed the river and would eventually find their way back to the base camp at French Creek. The cable way cage was on the opposite side of the river and we were unable to follow the tracks. Soon after we returned to the fire camp, a messenger arrived and reported the water carriers had showed up at a ranch across the river from the base camps at French Creek. They had then been boated across the river and were safe at the camps.

After several more episodes of lost youths, serious injuries, and some fatal ones during efforts to use enrollees on major fires on other Ranger Districts, the top brass of the Army and the Forest Officers involved, decided to hold a hearing in McCall to learn the facts about the problems in using inexperienced enrollees on project fires in rough, timbered areas.

They were finally convinced that enrollees and foremen alike should have intensive training in the use of fire tool and equipment, and on how to avoid pitfalls and dangers while working on the fire front. The youths were to be provided with at least two changes of wool socks, and properly fitted with hobnailed or composition soled foot gear. A trained first aid man was to patrol the fire line among the men while the work was in progress with adequate first aid supplies and equipment. An Army officer with at least the rank of lieutenant was to be assigned to each fire camp to lend a hand to the District Ranger or fire boss in determining the needs of the enrollees and other wise looking out for their welfare. The number of enrollees under each foreman was not to exceed seven.

This reorganization, including the weeding out of poorly qualified and disinterested Army Officers and some project foreman, marked the beginning and continued development of orderly and effective training and work accomplishment organizations. A good percentage of the enrollees continued to reenroll until they had completed their training as equipment operators, blasting experts, blacksmiths, and mechanics, and were qualified for employment as skilled men with private contractors. This was the objective of the Civilian Conservation Corps.

Winter Transportation and Deep Snow

During the first winter, the CCC camps were established near the Salmon River. Until the road was completed between Riggins and the French Creek camps it was necessary to supply the camps over snow roads from McCall through Burgdorf, and over Secesh and Fall Creek Summits. The monthly supplies included food for approximately 430 men, gasoline and oil for a dozen or more huge tractors, numerous trucks and air compressors, and ten to fifteen thousand pounds of high explosives for blasting purposes. This was no small undertaking

in the way of transporting over snow roads, with snow depths ranging up to fifteen feet on Secesh Summit, the divide between the Payette and Salmon River drainages.

The hauling job was accomplished by the use of two heavy logging sleds and a lighter enclosed bob sled, all hitched in tandem to a Model 60 Caterpillar track-type tractor equipped with snow treads. The logging sleds were each loaded with approximately five tons of weight. The enclosed bob sled was equipped with a cook stove, three single beds, cooking utensils, and food supplies, all of which was used by the tractor operators during relief periods. The tractor was also equipped with a heated cab and extra strong headlights. The outfit was kept in continuous operation day and night, except for stops to load and unload and to service the tractor.

Snowfall appeared to be almost constant on Secesh Summit. However, the continuous travel with the heavy outfit kept the snow well packed. During the return trips, when the sleds were not loaded, the operators would widen the snow trail. This provided a wide, well packed road bed. Sometimes when a blizzard was in progress on the summit at night, reducing visibility to zero, it was necessary for one of the relief operators to lead the way on foot with a strong flash light immediately ahead of the tractor.

There were four experienced operators serving in shifts of two to four hours, depending on weather conditions. The cook always had a pot of hot coffee on hand, and meals were served frequently in the rear sled. People talk about precision production. This Model 60 Caterpillar Tractor, or 2-lunger as it was referred as, performed most faithfully without breakdown throughout the hauling job. The loads were transferred to trucks at the snow line between Fall Creek Summit and the CCC camps.

I made two or three trips with the outfit, including one trip at night to watch the men and equipment perform. I marveled at the high degree of efficiency in which the hauling job was accomplished. It appeared to be a tough job in the beginning.

JOE BAYOK

I was born January 14, 1913, at Hopelawn, Woodbridge Township, New Jersey, in the home of my parents. My father was Marcus Bayok, born in Mukackevo, Czechoslovakia, under Austrian rule. He died on March 9, 1934. My mother, Elizabeth Filek, was born in Uzhgorod, Czechoslovakia. She came to the United States when she was thirteen years old. I don't know when my father came to the States. They married on October 13, 1895, and had eight children: Frank, Julia, Mark, Ann, Sophia, John, Joseph, and Michael. In 1989 only Sophia, John, and I are still living.

I attended Parochial schools through the eighth grade, then took a course in drafting from a vocational technical school. Later I worked on a dairy farm. A cow kicked me on the nose and I saw stars... I didn't stay in that job long. I tried to enlist in the Navy, but the Navy didn't need men at that time so they used the excuse that I had "hammerhead toes" and rejected me. I'm sure I could have out walked any of the sailors who were accepted.

When President Roosevelt started the Civilian Conservation Corps as a means to help so many young men in the East who had no jobs, I knew I wanted to join. I applied for the program at Woodbridge, the town next to us. And by gosh, I was accepted... all you had to be was young and broke! I was 19 at that time.

We went to Camp Dix for inoculations and our check ups. Camp Dix is just across the Delaware River on the New Jersey side from Philadelphia. We were there two weeks, at least the ones that stayed. Some of the fellows that were with me turned around the next day and left. I guess they were homesick. I stayed, and was sent ahead to McCall, Idaho, with the first group of twenty boys to set up camp for the main crew of 200. I was chosen because of what I knew about wood, and became the camp carpenter.

We came out to Idaho by train. The whole trail consisted of CCC enrollees, but there were different groups and many were dropped off along the way. When we were dropped off in McCall, I didn't know any of the people in my group. I stayed until a month after the camp was set up, which took about a month. We set up 8 or 10 big tents, 40 by 16 feet long.

Neal Boydstun of McCall was the superintendent of my camp, situated on Payette Lake, across the highway from where the Southern Idaho Timber Protective Association buildings are now located. There wasn't much of anything to do around camp after that, and I felt I was wasting my time so I asked for a transfer and got in on a brush detail. We were cleaning up, piling, and burning brush where the new highway is now, on the way toward the little ski hill. Both side of that road, maybe 200 yards on each side, was cleaned up. We also cleaned up a lot along Payette Lake, going toward Sylvan Beach. We did all this to lessen the fire hazard.

I then learned that our camp was going to get horses. I knew one end of a horse from the other, so I applied for that. I got the job through my friendship with Neal Boydston. I had a team of my own that I worked during the day and had three other teams that I had to care for at night. I was there alone for about two weeks taking care of the horses, getting them ready to go, feeding and watering them, etc. Then they decided it was too dangerous for me to be out there all alone, so they sent two other young fellows, but I still did most of the work.

After we had been there awhile we got the big Dry Lake Fire along Long Tom Creek. It was just west of Burgdorf several miles. The crew that I went out with walked most of the night after we got as far as we could by truck to get to the fire. The next morning 18 of the 20 boys turned around and went back to camp. They didn't want any part of it. It wasn't like the Army where they could penalize you for any infractions of any kind, but if we got too ornery, they could send us home.

Anyway, the foreman of the fire crew, Tom Jackson, was a real nice fellow, real good-hearted. After we got to the fire, I told him that I didn't want to go back to camp, but would stay. "Well," he said, "all you have to do is get yourself a sleeping bag and hang on to it." At that time, sleeping bags were short and just snapped together. Being six feet tall, if I straightened out and didn't stick my feet out of the bottom of the bag, I was exposed from the chest up; and if I got my shoulders covered and tried to straighten out, my feet stuck out the bottom.

There was plenty of food and plenty of tools to work with. I met up with a young fellow from Brooklyn, a little fellow, and he asked, "are you going to stay?" I told him I was and we stayed on. There were about 200 men on the fire, but out of the 20 from our group, only the two of us stayed. After nine days, the fire was under control. We asked the foreman if we could stay and patrol the fire, but were told you were only allowed to stay out for ten days, then you had to go back to camp. So after the work was done we were sent home. Those that didn't stay the first time were brought back to patrol the fire.

When I got back to camp I went back on road work where they were building a road from Lakeview Village, just past the golf course to the big point on the end of the peninsula. We then took the road to Shady Beach or Newcomb's camp. The work was hard, digging out trees, blasting rock and leveling the roadway by team. I was still in the spike camp, away from the main camp. Every time I came in to the main camp, all I had to do was ask for a truck and I could be taken down to Craighuams, that's where they had a hot water spring at the bottom of Goose Creek. At that time it wasn't like it is now, now it's quite a mess... hippies have taken over. However, back then it was nice. I could go anytime I wanted to go. Captain Nichols had told me, "all you have to do is ask." Of course if I went other got a chance to go along, but never very many. That was my experience in the CCC's. I was there in the summertime, we came in June and it was October when they left.

I was scheduled to go to another location, Evangeline Park, Louisiana, I talked to Neal about wanting to stay in McCall. Neal talked to his father and then told me

that I could live with his parents. I was released and moved to William and Hattie Boystun's home. I did all the chores around the place. They were very good to me.

Mr. Boydston had started a cabin at his claim. I asked to stay there and finish the cabin. Mr. Boydston sent in supplies and a cook stove. I carried them on my back the four miles from Smith Creek to Beaver Creek, two trips a day, 100 to 110 pounds to the load. On one trip when I was carrying the cook stove, I met Jesse Warner with his packstring. He told me, "You better get off the trail, the mules won't like that," (the stove on my back).

I spent the winter there, alone. Very seldom did anyone go by. I liked the experience and grew to really like the isolation in the primitive area. A friend, Guy Baker, and I spent a couple of winters together in Mr. Boydston's cabin. We rode skills which we made ourselves and traveled all over the country, sleeping in the snow.

Later, I worked in the Snow Shoe Mine where the noise was terrible hard on my ears. Finally, I started working for the Forest Service on the Idaho National Forest which is now the Payette National Forest, doing telephone maintenance, working with Wilmer Shaver and Nel Harala. During the fire season I was on Cold Mountain Lookout, a distance of eighty feet from the ground to the floor. I built a cabin at fifteen-minute intervals when I had to run up the steps to look for fires and answer the phone.

I spent a summer on Grass Mountain Lookout. In 1939, I decided that Marcella Whitney and I should get married. I really initiated her with horseback riding over mountain trails, sleeping on bough beds, following around while Nels Harala and I were working trails and telephone maintenance. Nel's wife, Vera, also went with us.

JOHN P. FERGUSON

When I first came west, all the locals called me a "New Yorker." I had an accent; however, I disliked being referred to as a "New Yorker." In fact, I often replied, in a belligerent manner, "I'm no damn New Yorker."

New Yorkers and New Jerseyites have an accent all their own and a poor one at that. New Englanders also have accents, but theirs are quite a bit different. But to most outsiders, they all seem to have a single, distinctive dialect. If westerners would take the time to recognize the different dialects they would note that there are actually four different accents spoken by New Englanders. Maine, New Hampshire and eastern Vermont have a relatively isolated preserved accent, long since lost to the urban centers. To outsiders the clipped pronunciation of such words as coat, home and stone come out as cut, hum, and stun. This is where my accent originated.

My wife, Ruth, who was raised on a ranch in Middleton, Idaho, is credited with teaching me to talk Western. After living here for about 60 years, I now speak Western.

A "Yankee" goes west: My experiences in the CCC

I was not familiar with Horace Greeley's adage "Go West Young Man, Go West," however, following my schooling I decided to chance an adventure. My father had plans for me to attend Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire, but I was intent on applying to the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut. A friend and I had embarked on a vacation down south, and upon returning to my aunt's home in New Jersey where I was staying, I heard stories of the CCC and the west. So, I forged my father's signature of approval (my father was out of the country, having left me with my aunt). On July 13, 1938, I enlisted in the CCC's at Fort Dix, New Jersey.

Travel on the troop train was uneventful, except for stopping on a siding to eat meals, swimming in the Missouri River for a bath, seeing the Chicago stock yards and smelling black coal smoke fumes and cinders from the steam engine heading West. Fourteen days later we stepped from the troop train in Shoshone, Idaho. I remember this moment vividly, it was a stark sight. Shoshone was a small railroad town in the middle of the Idaho desert. There were two sets of straight railroad tracks running through the center of town. The business and residential section was south of the tracks and the north side of the tracks included a couple of hotels, restaurants and house of ill-repute. The railroad station was on the north side of the tracks and stood bleak and empty, except for a few Blackfoot Indians, in their native dress. I understood that they were a public relations stunt for the building of Sun Valley Lodge that was under construction.

A group of U.S. Forest Service personnel (a superintendent and several CCC foremen) met the train and loaded all 200 men into a convoy of 1935 Dodge

trucks for the trip north to Redfish Lake. I had been befriended by the U.S. Army Top-Sargent, Slim Wilson, and was allowed to ride with him in an official duty colored Army truck that was sent from Boise to serve the camp. The convoy stopped in Hailey for a short welcome by the Sawtooth Forest Supervisor, then on to Ketchum. A brief stop in Ketchum allowed me to see the St. George Casino, it was the first gambling hall I had ever seen.

As I recall, the road was narrow but paved. Above Ketchum it was gravel. We passed the Russian John Guard Station, a most picturesque location, and proceeded to the Galena Summit. At Galena Summit, I got my first look at the beautiful Sawtooth Valley with its sky-blue lakes, craggy, rugged mountain peaks of the Sawtooth Range, and the green timber that provided a contrast to the overall scene. A forester pointed out the location of the springs that formed the source of the Salmon River, the famous River of No Return. At the time, I didn't realize that I was looking over the expansive, wild country that I was destined to traverse and crisscross over the next 50 years. That included my CCC and later Forest Service careers. The area was approximately 150 miles wide and 200 miles in length and extended from the Snake River eastward to Highway 93 (Galena Summit) and northward from Ketchum to Lolo Pass (Highway 12). People called the area the "back-country." It included all private and Government lands, with the majority being National Forest and Wilderness lands.

During a short stop at Smiley Creek, I learned the history of Vienna; an old abandoned mining town. In 1883, the town had about 800 people and 200 buildings. By 1887 the mining boom was over and the town virtually abandoned. Years later (1962), I was assigned to survey the townsite and mines. As a result of my survey, I found that the actual location of Vienna was three miles from where it was identified on the Forest Service map. I found most of the buildings rotted or destroyed, however, I did find the original U.S. Mineral Monument No.1, and remonumented the position with a brass cap monument.

The only places inhabited in the Valley were the newly built Fourth-of-July Ranger Station, an Indian Trading Post at Obsidian and the Rocky Mountain Lodge. The Ranger at the Sawtooth Ranger Station was Arthur Berry, just the type of man I expected a ranger to be. At the "trading post" I met an Indian girl named Mary. We use to swim in Perkins Lake, it had a hot spring in the upper part of the lake and one could swim from cold water into hot water.

The convoy eventually turned off at the Redfish Lake Road. It was a wonderful sight to see, a long straight piece of road encased in heavy green timber and pointing to the rugged peak of Mount Heyburn, the spectacular mountain peak at the head of Redfish Lake. About a half a mile before reaching the lake the convoy came to a halt in a large open area. We had now arrived at my new temporary home, CCC Company 202, Camp F-412 on the Sawtooth National Forest.

Redfish Lake Camp

The summer camp was pleasant, military-styled, tent camp, with only a couple of wooden buildings (Forest Service Office, Army Office, bathhouse, library, etc.). Overall, the camp was laid out in an excellent manner. Located near the camp at Redfish Lake were the Forest Service's Redfish Guard Station, and the Redfish Lake Lodge. The guests of the Lodge were rich folks on vacation from the East Coast, which surprised no one.

Work was physically demanding, however, considerable construction and maintenance was accomplished. I worked on the Pole Creek telephone line, the Horton Peak Lookout, the Bench Lakes Trail. From the spike camp located at Alturus Lake, trails were constructed from the lake to the Boise Forest and across the Sawtooth to Imogene, Hell Roaring, Sawtooth and Stanley Lake. In 1938, I placed my name in a Prince Albert tobacco can atop Mt. Heyburn for posterity – it may still be there. Superintendent Elwood C. Pugh and the other CCC foreman made an effort to train each man in the use of tools, building different types of structures, and getting as much as possible from their CCC experience.

Contrary to some thinking, the "boys" were not delinquents sent from the East. Ninety-nine percent of us were clean-cut young men from the New England and New York area. I came from Lancaster, New Hampshire, although I also lived in Bar Harbor, Maine; Boston, Massachusetts; and Arlington, New Jersey, -- my childhood is another story. The other one percent were on probation by the courts or just plain bad boys. Top-Sargent Wilson beat them into shape in the first few days, and I really mean, "beat" them." I never knew the need for any disciplinary action in the camps.

My decision to become a full-fledged westerner was made on his first Saturday night visit to Stanley, Idaho. At the Ace-of-Diamonds Saloon, the Clayton miners were knocking the hell out of the Challis cattlemen, with 2x4's and butt chains. It was something on the style of a John Wayne movie brawl. Seeing the gory fight, I thought, "this is the wild, Wild West, and just the place for me."

It was at this time that I became friends with Charlie Langer, Forest Ranger on the Stanley District, of the Challis National Forest. We became close friends until Ranger Langer was killed during a Forest Service mission searching for a B-17 bomber that crashed in the Middle Fork Salmon River Country on March 30, 1943. I learned a lot about the Forest Service from Ranger Langer.

I was promoted to Forestry Clerk, a position similar to that of top-Sargent in the Army organization. The responsibilities were divided, the Army officers were in-charge of the men and camp and the Forest Service was responsible for the work projects. I, under the authority of the superintendent, wielded a big club. The Army was only allowed a few men for camp maintenance and the Army officers were always begging for additional help. I used my authority in a crafty way.

We move camp for the winter

Eventually, fall came, and with it, rain and snow. The Forest Service planned to transfer the camp to Riggins, Idaho. The convoy trip from Redfish Lake to Riggins was the equivalent of a National Geographic exploration journey into unknown country. We made it reasonably well to Cape Horn Valley, and then the "stuff" hit the fan, so to speak. The roads from Fir Creek, on into Bear Valley, and then through to Landmark and Warm Lake, were a catastrophe of bottomless mud holes, downed trees and washouts, steep, slick sidehills and generally a wild wilderness country. It was necessary to repair or rebuild bridges and make corduroy roadbeds to navigate the swamp areas. Snow was a problem around Deadwood to Landmark and over the summit to Warm Lake. The Forest Service had a well established Ranger Station and facilities at Landmark, a stopover in route.

At Warm Lake, I first met the famous old pioneer woman, Molly Kessler. She and her husband ran a hotel and store at the lake. Molly was well known for her hunting and fishing feats. In the winter of 1935, Molly heard the engines of the United Air Lines airplane, lost in a snowstorm over Warm Lake. She lit fires on the ice and telephoned the ranchers between Warm Lake and Cascade to do the same. The pilot was guided to a safe landing at Cascade. I had a picture of the airplane at Cascade that Molly gave me. In subsequent years, I got to know Molly better when the CCC camp was later moved to the South Fork Salmon River site.

Warm Lake to Cascade was an easy ride. A radiator or two boiled over and the brakes on the truck went out. However, we made it to the Crawford Ranger Station and passed the airport into Cascade. The original location of the airport was parallel to the Warm Lake road and about a mile or two east of the Payette River. The present airport at Cascade is south of town and beside Highway 55 on the way to Boise.

On to McCall we traveled. It was a small town on the south end of a beautiful lake, Payette Lake. McCall was a lively town and had gambling and more than its share of bars, but it was a nice clean town. We had a stopover at the Supervisor's Office (SO), which had been recently built (1936). Across from the SO was a State of Idaho CCC Camp, along the lake front. At New Meadows we turned north down the valley and the Little Salmon River. The river was wild looking and we enjoyed it. About a mile or so before Riggins, we turned off over a CCC built log bridge. About a mile north of the bridge, we arrived at a large flat, the new home of Company 202, Camp F-106. We arrived on October 15th 1938. Camp F-106 was built and ready for the "boys." It had all wooden Army-type barracks and other buildings, and was a good looking camp for winter.

Winter in Salmon Country

The project work was similar to that of other camps, road construction, bridge building, building lookouts, trails, etc. The primary job was the construction of the

Salmon River Road. The road had been built to French Creek and continued on to Wind River. It was begun in 1933 and reached French Creek in 1936, but sections were in need of improvement. A CCC Camp had been established at French Creek and was manned by Idaho men. Another CCC Camp was located at Pollock, Idaho, about 2 or 3 miles up river from Camp F-106. Men from California occupied it. The Riggins and Pollock camps didn't get along well, however, the Riggins and French Creek camps got along fine and often worked together as a single unit. The French Creek camp was supervised by Superintendent Fred Kirby and the Riggins camp was under Superintendent Elwood E. Pugh. Pugh was a tall man, about 6 foot 6 inches and had been a former Idaho State Highway Patrolman. He dressed in English riding boots and British Joohfurs-type breeches. With a Wyatt Earp hat on he was a commanding figure. The regular CCC foremen (US Forest Service) were: Bill Zimmerman, Fred Reed, John Nasi, Bud Fisher, John Dooley, Bill Ax, and George Hiekola, all had families in McCall. Steve Wisdom came from New Meadows. Camp F-106 at Riggins was an excellent camp and a credit to the CCC's.

I continued to pick up the Western ways. On my first trip to the town of Riggins I was enlightened. After one sees the general store, saloon and schoolhouse there was nothing more to do. I decided to hitchhike to the next town. I asked an old fellow, "how far is the next town?" He answered, "down the road a piece." I hitchhiked to Grangerville and back to Riggins. I realized that the local unit of measurement of "down the road a piece" was equivalent to 50 miles each way. The Riggins and Pollock boys mixed it up on occasions. One weekend we issued pick handles to the men and they ran all the Californians back to their camp.

I recall most how the crews would drill holes in the solid rock, all week long, on the Salmon River road. Then on the weekend the CCC foremen would set off the blasting charges. The following week the mess was cleaned up and more drill holes were completed for the next blast. However, the road was a few hundred feet longer. I made it a point to meet and talk to all the Salmon River Savages up and down the river. They were, in my opinion, a strange mixture, good hard-working ranchers; down on their luck miners, squatters and just plain crazy hermits. The Army Commanding Officer, Captain Cloninger, ran his own pig farm, feeding them all the slop from the messhall.

I don't believe the Forest Service ever intended to build the road to connect with the road below Shoup, on the Salmon National Forest. Riggins to French Creek was approximately 17 miles, Wind River was an additional 5 miles, and the road went to Long Tom Creek another 3 miles and ended. The unfinished sections were Long Tom Creek, to the Shepp Ranch about 12 miles and another 9 miles to Mackey Bar. Mackey Bar, at the time, would have been the end of the road. An unfinished piece of road between Mackey Bar and Corn Creek will never be constructed. It is in the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness.

We move again

The winter of 1938-39 was over and on May 15, 1939, the CCC Camp, Co. 202, F-168, was moved to the South Fork Salmon River. It was located on the flat adjacent to the Reed Ranch. The ranch was occupied by "Deadshot Reed" and his family. He was purported to be an outlaw by the Texas Rangers and was a more or less famous person in the back-country. He had an argument with George Krassel, who had the Krassel Ranch that became the Krassel Ranger Station, and shot him dead and left him to lay in the sun until Sheriff Logue came into the South Fork to pick up the body. It was a justified homicide, as was all the crimes that occurred in the back-country. Reed's sons were also famous as cougar hunters. The Phoebe Creek – Eaglerock – Teapot Dome area was prime cougar hunting country. Camp F-168 was similar to the Riggins camp. It had wooden, military-type barracks and other buildings, and was in a pleasant location, the South Fork Salmon River that was full of trout and salmon.

The project work was similar to that of the other camps. The primary work was on the South Fork Salmon road from Knox to below the Krassel Ranger Station. Trail and bridge work filled in and recreation facilities were begun. At the time, Poverty Flat Ranger Station existed, however, its status changed to a guard station. On a personal note, I was married in 1941 and honeymooned at the Poverty Flat Guard Station.

One incident I will always remember happened when we were short men, and I was sent to Knox to flag down any vehicles that tried to drive down the road, because blasting was in progress. A green sedan drove up and the driver said, "I'm going to the CCC camp." I said, "you can't go down that road." The driver said, "I'm Regional Forester, C.N. Woods." I replied, "I don't give a damn who you are, you are not going down this road." He waited a couple of hours until the road was opened and went on to the camp. That night, Regional Forester, C.N. Woods, while playing poker and having a drink with the superintendent and foremen, congratulated me on my alert safety performance to the group. Prior to that I didn't even know who C.N. Woods was.

Another time, I was driving a load of supplies back from McCall when a lightning strike hit in the road in front of the truck. It was nighttime and dark out. The strike was close enough to disable the truck, at least I couldn't get it started. I was scared, but I needed to get help. I decided to walk down the South Fork road, in the pitch dark, to Poverty Flat Ranger Station, about 7 or 8 miles. I remember walking with big rocks in each hand, seeing imaginary piercing eyes of cougars and bears looking at me from the sides of the road. However, I felt better when I reached the Ranger Station at daylight.

Back to Riggins

On November 1, 1939, the CCC camp was moved back to Riggins, to Company 202, Camp F-106. The activities were the same the previous year, road, trail, bridge and other construction. It was a great camp, but not much happened.

That is, except for the Lake Creek and Manning bridges crossing the Salmon River, the only other way across the river were on cables stretched across the river at various places, with a box fit to move along on pulleys. The first half of the ride was downhill about to the water and the second half of the ride was devoted to pulling yourself up to the other shore. It was fun unless the box hit the water. In later years, that actually happened to me a couple of times. And one time, Foreman Fred Reed was riding the cable near the Manning Bridge, in a barrel fitted in a sling. In the middle of the river, the barrel slipped out of the sling and Fred fell into the Salmon River. He swam for a mile or more before he was able to get to the river bank.

As for myself, I worked as a Forestry Clerk. I managed to get a vacation and made a trip to California to a Rose Bowl game. I was the best dressed fellow in Pasadena... I had borrowed all the fine clothes I could get from the other men in camp. Money and clothes made me a full-fledged "dude" of the west.

South Fork for the summer

The CCC camp was moved back to the South Fork for the summer. For awhile, I served as a CCC foreman, in the Galagher (Grimes Pass) Camp, Company 5489, Camp F-66. The camp was full of Alabama men, a nasty bunch. They used razors to settle arguments and I wore a gun for protection. No Alabamian was going to get me.

To conclude, at 78 years old, I am aware that my writing is susceptible to contamination of memory. Over time a person may forget things that happened and remember things that didn't I am vague on various assignments and dates during this period of my career.

I do recall that during the latter part of my CCC duty, I was temporarily assigned to various duties. I was a clerk in the Payette (old) Supervisor's Office, under Jack O'Neill, Administrative Officer and Elnora (Dietrich) Anderson, Chief Clerk. I was sent to the High Valley District, under Holt Fritchman, Forest Ranger and Tom Cherry, Assistant Ranger. Shortly I was assigned to Lynn Knight, Fire Dispatcher/Warehouseman at the Cascade Ranger Station complex. It was, while delivering supplies to the old Cascade Airport, I first met Bob and Dick Johnson of the famous Johnson Flying Service that contracted to fly personnel and supplies to the back country for the Forest Service. I later worked with Johnson Flying Service in my Forest Service career.

I reported to Fire Control, on the Idaho National Forest, and was a member of the Fire Super-Crew (Hot Shots), on the South Fork Salmon River. The camp was located at the junction of the East Fork and South Fork Salmon Rivers. The work, when not on fires, was continuing the road construction of the South Fork road and the building of the concrete bridges at the mouth of the East Fork and over the Secesch River at the South Fork.

This was the beginning of my Forest Service career. I was on a 10-month appointment. I received my permanent appointment in 1943, and never had another job. I retired from the Forest Service on January 11, 1980.



Salmon River

FLOYD FLOOD

Floyd was enrolled at Camp Gallagher, Company 1997, for six months, and was then honorably discharged. In the spring of 1935 he signed on again, this time at French Creek, Company #1348, on the Salmon River, twenty miles upstream from Riggins, Idaho. He was only in Riggins a month or two, then went to McCall, Idaho, spending the summer of 1935. He was then transferred to the District Headquarters, where he spent one and one-half years. Floyd then took another honorable discharge, this time after taking a civil service examination to go to work for the Forest Service.

He remembered that in the early days of the CCC, some of the clothes issued at the camps were all one size. Floyd recalled once standing inspection in a pair of pants that he had to buckle up under his armpits. The captain went along with the joke, marching him up the aisle for everyone to see, the model enrollee in his neat uniform.

During the six months at Camp Gallagher, they worked on mountain roads. One incident that he remembered occurred on the shelf road above the South Fork of the Payette River. This road had barely been passable before the CCC started working on it, but they widened it, took out some of the sharp curves, and made it a real good route between Garden Valley and Lowman, Idaho.

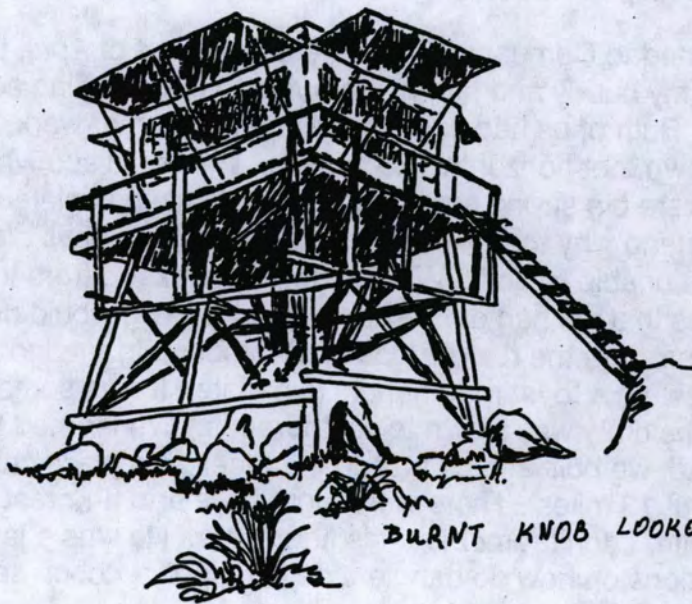
They also had one spike camp (side camps). One of the jobs they did there was building lookout towers for spotting fires. At this time, the CCC boys were on call for any forest fire in the area. Floyd was on several fires, one was called the "Boiling Springs" fire, which covered 40,000 acres. The worst fire he recalled was the "Big Creek" fire, the next year, out of McCall, Idaho. The camp was fighting this fire for two weeks. It was burning in lodgepole pine. Forty percent of the timber was dead from insects, so it burned very fast; helped by 30-mile-per-hour winds. This fire traveled very fast. Seventeen boys were almost trapped in this fire. All that saved them was that there was a damp, marshy area where there were big rocks and no trees, where they just waited out the fire for four hours. Then picking their way through the embers, they made it back to camp. It was a good thing that this camp was in a cleared area or the camp would have been lost by fire.

Floyd also recalled one incident when a bunch of logs had washed up near the shore of the camp. The boys in camp took the opportunity to test their skills, and went running from one log to another. Predicting what would happen eventually, Floyd went inside the barracks and started a big, roaring fire. Sure enough, the boys soon came in, soaked to the skin by the icy cold mountain water.

Floyd was transferred to the District Headquarters in Boise, Idaho, where he did mostly office work. His office was the supply headquarters and motor pool, where they repaired the trucks. He enjoyed this job, feeling that it kept him off the street, looking for work. The District Headquarters also put out a weekly

magazine called the "Armfor News," named as a combination of the words "Army" and "Forestry."

One of the most frightening experiences he had was when a pair of dual wheels fell off of one of the trucks as they were on an icy mountain road. They thought that the truck, men and all were going to be lost down the canyon. The weather was sub-zero, and the men were nearly frozen by the time they got the truck fixed.



BURNT KNOB LOOKOUT "1936"

FRED H. GIBSON

It was 1934; I had just turned 17 and lied about my age so I could go with a good friend who was more than a year older than I was. We signed up and boarded a truck that hauled about twenty of us southern Idaho boys to Boise Army barracks to spend the night. After lights out, when most of us were in our bunks half-asleep, someone turned on the lights. A bunch of bed bugs went scurrying across the floor and into the cracks in the walls and ceiling. Needless to say, I did not have a good nights sleep.

We were loaded up and on our way by 8 a.m. We stopped in Homedale for lunch at a small café. Arriving in Riggins about 6 p.m., we stayed the night at the CCC camp there. Most of the boys in that camp were from New York and New Jersey. The next morning after breakfast at 7 a.m., we were loaded back into a truck and hauled to a bridge that was under construction a few miles above Riggins. We crossed there, and walked up a mountain trail, over a hill, and back down to a pack bridge. We crossed the Salmon River there and were picked up by a truck from the French Creek camp F-108/F-109. We were told this was only twelve miles, but to some of the "tender foots" it felt like one hundred and twelve. My buddy and I helped two other guys otherwise; they would never have made it.

We were assigned to Company 1348. Around the first of April, the Forest Foreman chose my buddy and me, as he put it, to finish drilling some holes for a bridge anchor. Both of us had experience in jackhammer work, but that had been drilling down, not horizontal like this job. We could see why they picked the two of us; we were big strong ranch raised boys. We completed the job and couldn't understand why the New York and New Jersey boys didn't want to do the job, or were unable to do it. When we were released from that job, the Foreman told us that we had done such a good job, we would now get to do some real drilling... on the rock ledges on the mountain road to Burgdorf! Lucky us!?! Anyway, we got to learn to handle dynamite. It was some experience, that is until one of the crew was blown to smithereens. We learned fast. After starting the road, we built a pack trail up the creek to a place called Squaw Meadows, about 13 miles. There were eight boys and a Forest Service Foreman named Mr. White, I don't remember his first name. He was a jewel, and gave us special instructions on how do handle dynamite, pull a ribbon saw, and make special cuts with a double bitted axe.

In mid May, we were told the total company would be transferred to McCall, I don't remember the exact date, but it was around the middle of June. A camp was being construction on the shore of Payette Lake. We didn't realize until we unloaded at the lake's shore, what a wonderful place had been arranged for us to spend the summer. We didn't go right to the lake and go swimming, only because there was still ice within ten feet of the shore. However, within a week or ten days it was gone. But the water would sure make you catch your breath when you ventured very far or very deep.

While there, we helped build a log office for the Forest Service, built the structures for the camp, and enjoyed the town. Our camp Captain was named Goetz, our medical officer was Lt. McQueen, but I don't remember the Adjutant Lt.'s name... he didn't impress me, probably because he was a little military martinet. No one liked him! I remember two forestry foremen, Art Donica, and a younger man we called "Pop" Nielson. Capt. Goetz and Mr. Donica had daughters about my age. I suppose that is why I remember them so well.

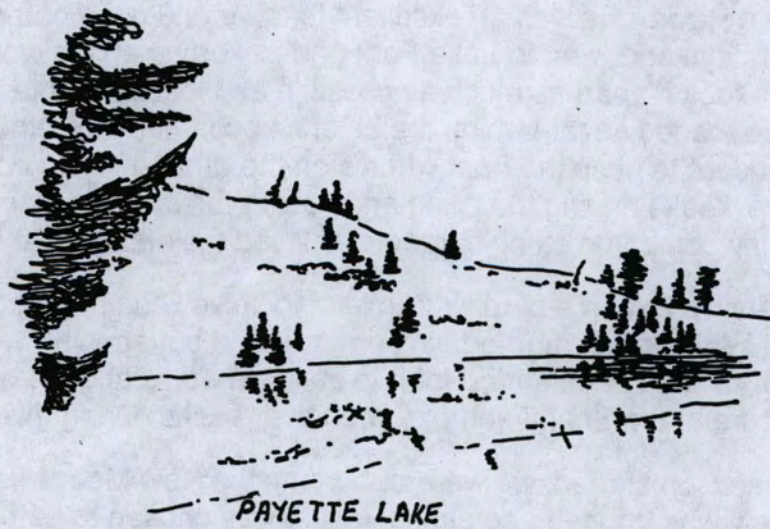
Around three weeks after we hit McCall, we were set up to haul another group of boys to our old French Creek camp. They were eastern New York and New Jersey boys, and when they issued off the train, they immediately found that there were rocks to throw. They had probably never seen rocks like this, probably only having pieces of brick to toss back home. We got them loaded and out of town before they broke all of the nearby windows. A week later we drove the Ambulance to French Creek and hauled back the body of a boy who went swimming in the Salmon cross current just below French Creek. He had paid no attention to the warnings, stating he had swam in the Ocean and no little pissley river could compare with that! We hauled him to the morgue in Boise the next day.

An older fellow (over 30) asked me if I would like to help him drive a pier out into the lake and I agreed, as it would be something new and useful to learn. His name was Allen Rowe. He was an excellent teacher and good companion. We took four other boys and went to Lake Fork and picked up an old wooden frame pile driver. We took it apart as much as possible and loaded it on a ½ ton Chevy truck. We were loaded so far behind the balance point, the four other guys sat on the front fenders to keep the front wheels on the ground so we could steer. We spent three weeks driving the piling and setting the camps. Another crew with George Newcomb, the camp carpenter, placed the stringers and decking.

I remember very well when a carnival clip joint took Newcomb for most of the 130 dollars he had saved to get married. When we found out about it, we went in force to the carnival and demanded for it to be returned,... and we got it back! The town police and the Sheriff sort of turned their backs during this escapade.

When the fire season started, we were out on the big New Meadows fire, where a complete crew was trapped and almost lost. I was chosen to be flown into a fire near the Chamberlain Basin. When it was under control and we went back to the Chamberlain airfield, I became acquainted with an aircraft mechanic by the name of Gibson. While helping him repair Tom McCall's Travelair plane, I met Tom and was asked if I would like to fly with him and push bundles out of the plane for fire fighters on the ground. I was in "HOG HEAVEN!" I also worked WITH Chick Walker and his old Blanca doing the same. I did this without benefit of a safety belt. Years later, I would have been appalled at such an unsafe operation. But I had felt safe, as long as I had one hand on a strut, longeron or frame. I learned to fly with those two very special people.

As the fire season continued, and when I wasn't flying, I hauled men and supplies into the Big Creek fire... what a road! When the fire season finally ended, I was transferred to the Headquarters group in Boise. I hauled loads to most of the CCC camps within a radius of one hundred and fifty miles. In mid November, I was home for my 18th birthday and Thanksgiving. During those seven months, I grew up and learned many things, and it turned a callow boy into a man. I wouldn't even trade that time for winning the lottery!



GEORGE JOHN GILBERT (as told to Steve Matz)

George J. Gilbert entered the CCC at the Squaw Creek Camp (F-92) on October 1, 1935. At 20 years old he was the youngest CCC enrollee at the camp. He helped build the Cove Creek Camp (F-401) and remained there until 1941 when they shipped the camp machinery to Boise for the war effort. He spent 18 months with the CCC and then worked for the Forest Service. In 1937, he met his future wife while at the camp.

Cove Creek Camp

Herb St. Clair was the Camp Commandant and the Camp foremen included: Clarence Schultz, Dave Temple, and Bill Winfield. Lightning killed Schultz, his widow then sold George a cabin on Colson Creek for \$125.

The Cove Creek camp stored trash that was hauled by the Ebenezer CCC camp members and stored in trenches excavated by heavy equipment. The camp also had a Forest Service machinery yard.

Projects accomplished by the camp were primarily road building. Equipment used to build the roads varied. Mac Jackovac ran the shovel. George ran the bulldozer for five years and a motor patrol (road grader) for two to three years. Local residents would hire out their horse teams to do work, especially hauling rocks on stone boats. Local landowner, Mr. A.E. Watson, worked on the road with his team for around seven years. Since everyone was having a hard time making it they used this opportunity to employ local horse teams to provide extra cash for the area. They used a track mounted diesel "Northwestern" shovel or drag line with $\frac{3}{4}$ yard bucket.

Supplies came from North Fork, Salmon and the commissary. The commissary had candy, towels, and soap, but no liquor. You had to sneak liquor in from outside. Wild Root Hair Tonic was the favored brand and was not just used because it was in the commissary. If you couldn't get something at the commissary, Mr. Borden, at the North Fork Store would give a month's groceries on credit. They sent trucks in daily for fresh meat and groceries and kept them on ice in a rock-lined cellar dug into the hillside at Ebenezer. The cellar stayed cool even in the hottest summer months. The food was really good at Cove Creek, even though there were always rumors about bad grub.

The most enjoyable entertainment included dances and "smokers." Smokers were boxing or wrestling matches held with other camps. Dances were held in Salmon as well as at Cove Creek, where they had four or five dances.

The men in the camp got along pretty well, but there was some tension between camps. If there was any trouble in camp the Army broke it up right away. Cove Creek camp had the most trouble with a couple of companies of New Yorkers and the California companies that were made up of "Mexicans."

Animals and Hunting

Animals were common around the camp. The men at camp found a little black bear in a tree outside of the camp and began to feed him garbage. Over time the bear grew into a big strapping brown bear that got pretty mean before he was run off. Another day they found and roped a sick bighorn sheep ram out of the back of a pickup. They tied it to a tree in camp behind the Forest Service barracks and a veterinarian worked with the men to nurse it back to health. It was a real fighter and got mean so someone either let it go or it escaped. There were lots of fish in the river, which could be seen really well from rocks at the mouth of the Middle Fork. However, there were not as many fishermen then as there are now. The CCC boys would do some fishing, but not a lot. One day, George's older brother Del visited the camp and while exploring, spied a really big male goat on the rocks at the mouth of the Middle fork. George and Del waited until the opening day of hunting season and went back to find the goat. They set out before dawn. As it became light they saw the goat up ahead, but realized someone was closer and was going to beat them to the goat. They decided to split up. George and his new 300 Savage laid down at a good spot and took aim where they thought the goat was while Del snuck around to try and get ahead of the guy above them. As soon as it appeared that the other man was getting ready to shoot, George took aim and hit the goat right below the heart from about a quarter a mile away. The other man was angry and yelled at Del, asking him if he had shot the goat. Del answered, "no it was the other SOB below us." George and Del tracked the goat to the top of the cliffs above the Middle Fork and finished it off. They then drug it down hill to the river. The goat was so big, and the trail so narrow, they put it into the water and drug it that way. When they got to the mouth of the Middle Fork they had to go under seven steelhead fishermen's lines. They then hoisted the goat into a cable car and took it over to the other side of the river.

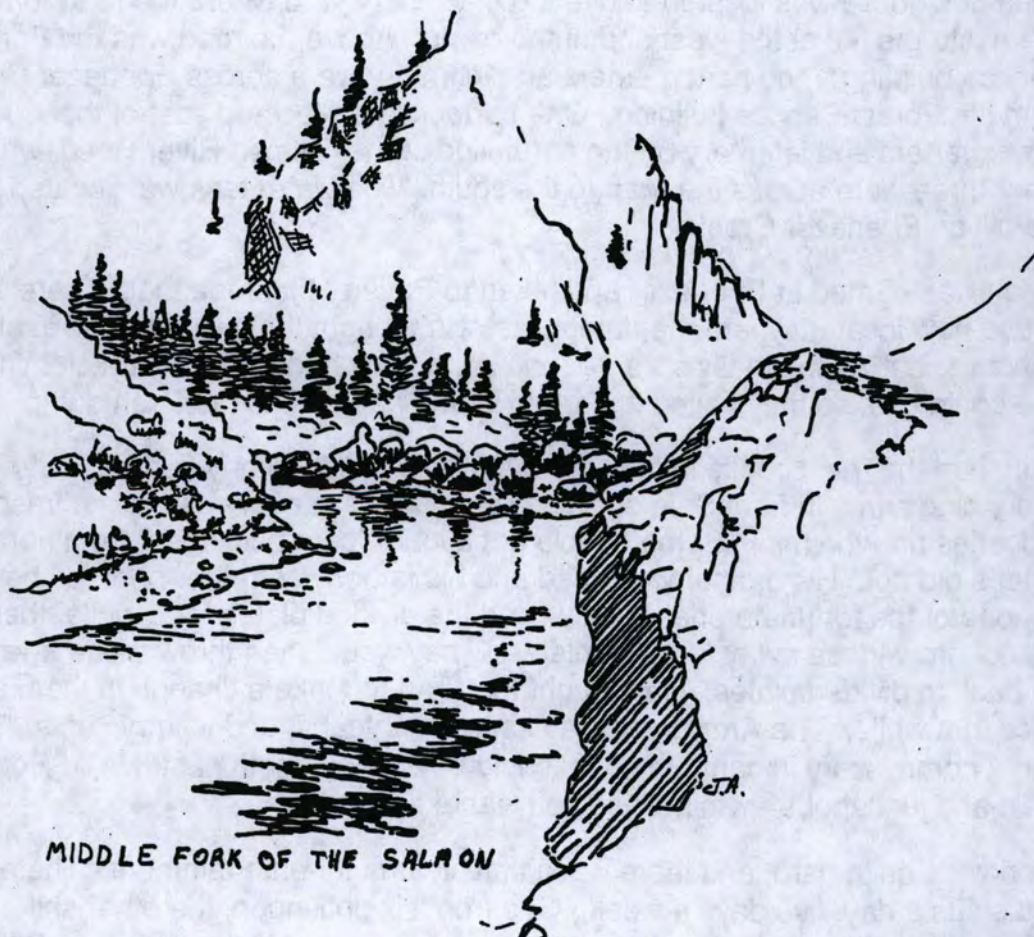
There were a number of river men around the camps. Two of the best known were Dave Sandoval and Captain Geulecke. Dave Sandoval often slept in and then had to leap up and rush to work. One day they nailed his boots to the floor so that when he leapt up and tried to leave for work he fell on his face.

The river men made sweep boats that measured 32 feet long and 8 feet wide to haul groceries down river once a summer. Dave Sandoval was probably 65 years old at the time, but was "all man, not big, but all man." Another river man named Killiam would go into town in the fall and next spring build a sweep boat, load it with groceries, and head down the river to pan for gold in the summer. Once he hit a rock at Dutch Henry and tipped over and up, throwing about 1000 pounds of flour up the hillside.

Down river from the camp there was a family where the wife was already living in town. When the daughter was old enough to start school, the husband loaded his daughter and her favorite cat with seven kittens into the 1936 Ford Coupe and headed into town. The car started acting up so he kept pressing the gas lever ever harder into the floor to keep it going. Well, the cat's tail got under the

gas pedal, and when the pedal finally came down on the tail, the cat clawed her way up the man's leg. The car went out of control and over the edge of the road, ending up with two wheels in the water. Fittingly, George pulled them out of the river with a "cat line" (also called a drag line).

An electrician by the name of Jack Wilson, who lived at Hughes Creek, killed his wife while the CCC were at Cove Creek. His wife weighed about 200 pounds, but according to George, was a "really fine looking woman." In the fall of one year, he pulled his car up to a steep grade and then used some jacks to tip it over until it fell down the hill and burst into flames. All they could find of his wife was "thirty pounds of bones." When they caught up to Wilson and did a little checking, they found he was wanted for murder and train robbery in Texas. George's other brother, Leo, used to ride back and forth to camp with Wilson quite a bit. Everyone was surprised to find out about Wilson's past because he was such a good electrician and person.



MIDDLE FORK OF THE SALMON

LEO GILBERT (as told to Steve Matz)

Leo Gilbert was stationed at Camp F-401 from its beginning until April or May of 1937. He said he was at both camps, and I assume he meant the initial Cove Creek camp, before Ebenezer was built; however, he could have meant Squaw Creek or Panther Creek camps. He was very confused about locations at first, but when we straightened out the location of Colson Creek to Ebenezer Creek, he became more sure of where he was talking about. While he never waivered from saying the dump was at Poverty Flat and that nothing happened at Cove Creek.

Leo Gilbert started in the drill crew, moved to driving trucks and finally to driving a catapillar. He said that they had mostly "55 Clea" tracks and one or two catapillar tractors. About the time he left, they brought in a 3/8 yard truck mounted steam shovel that was pretty small. He remembered that Mr. Jackovac drove the steam shovel. The machinery yard was located in what is now the group camp below the road and all repairs were done there. Each camp had their own machinery yard, including the Panther Creek Camp.

The cook house was located above the machinery yard where the road turned down into the flat at the west end of the camp. Above the road was the Forest Service building. The headquarters and infirmary were across Ebenezer Creek from the Forest Service building. One barracks was located east of the headquarters and infirmary on the north side of the Salmon River Road, while the other three were across the road to the south. The water tank was located up the hill on Ebenezer Creek.

Trash was burned at Ebenezer and taken to Poverty Flat for burial. There is a house now located where the dump was. He thought they were buried in slit trenches, but wasn't really sure. At one point, they had a lot of extra clothing no one could use, so they bailed it, burned it, and hauled it to the trash dump.

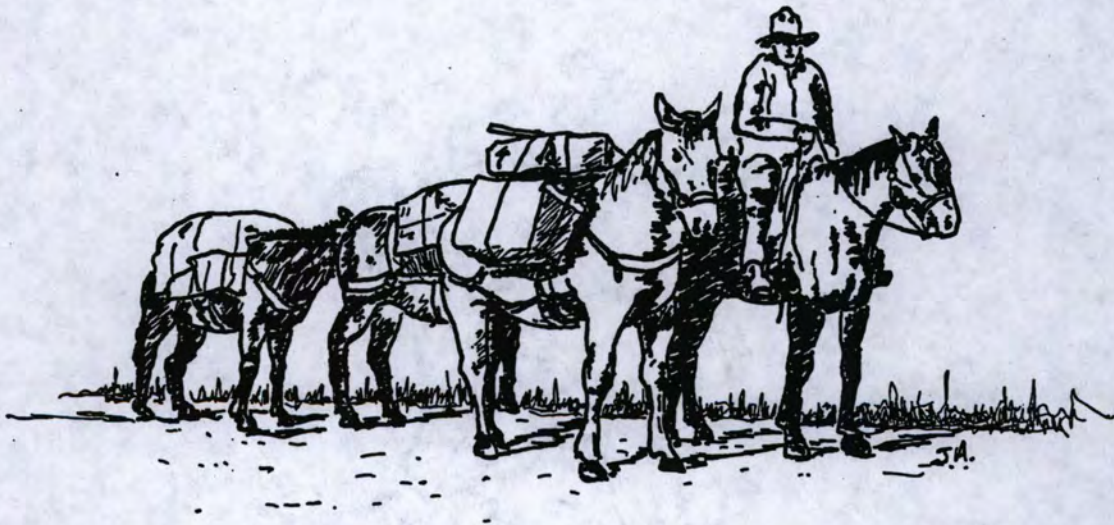
They had the "best cooks in the country". They didn't do any hunting, but everything came in from Salmon. They sent trucks in every day to get fresh groceries and the mail. Some people got a lot of "care packages" from home, other's did not. His mother was dead and his father was rather poor, so he was not one of the fortunate ones. They used the divided plates for a while, then would throw those away for plain plates. They would then throw those away and go back to divided plates. He thought they had to make a change in them every once in a while. The Army issued mess kits, canteens, and toiletry items. They had a commissary in camp that you could buy candy, tooth paste, Wild Root hair tonic and just about anything else you wanted.

Work was quite hard, and there wasn't much time for entertainment. There were two shifts a day, five days a week. One from six until noon, the other shift ran seven or eight hours in the afternoon. They tried to get the boys interested in baseball and tennis, but they were generally too tired after working 13-14 hour days. Dances were held once a month, with girls being trucked in from town.

They could get a pass to go into town, and typically did so once a month; usually coming back broke and sick. Within the camp everyone got along fairly well. However, there were a few fights in town. Leo didn't remember a policy making the camp dry, but does remember there was not a lot of liquor available. You could get a bottle or two when you went into town.

He also remembered hearing about Dave Schultz getting hit by lightning and another boy being killed in a rock slide. In January, a new bunch from South and/or North Dakota had been brought in. In March, as the frost was leaving the ground, five guys were walking up the road out of camp when a rock slide let loose and killed one of them, injuring two others. Those were the only deaths he remembered hearing about.

Leo didn't think the Ebenezer pictographs were ever covered by rock, however, he does remember a few of the Shoup pictographs being uncovered by the work they did. He did the drilling right in front of the Ebenezer pictograph site.



DAVID W. LYONS (as told to Larry Kingsbury)

David Lyons was part of the CCC camp, S-223, Company 1997, located on the south end of Payette Lake, in McCall, Idaho. The camp was located directly in front of the present location of the Payette National Forest's McCall District Office.

David was recruited from Boise, Idaho. He was an assistant educational advisor at the camp and taught photography. For this work, he was paid \$30 a month, half of which he sent home to his family. Also working at the camp was an older Finnish carpenter named George Newcomb. The camp enrollees did a number of work projects, including fire fighting, construction, splitting firewood, cooking, snow shoveling, etc.

Camp S-223 was built in 1935. It had eight military style barracks, with 20 boys to a barrack. The barracks were heated with wood burning stoves, one at each end of the building. The boys had to shovel snow off the roofs in the winter. Other buildings included a pyramid style Army tent on a platform, that was used as a shower tent. There was also a company circle with a flag pole, a recreational hall with a library and dark room that was used for David's photography class.



HARRY MOORE

Harry Moore enrolled in the CCC in his hometown of McCall, Idaho, and was fortunate to be assigned to the McCall camp. The work this camp was engaged in was cleaning up the beaches on the Payette Lakes. There were two lakes, upper and lower, the lower one being the larger of the two, with thirty miles of shoreline. The town of McCall is located on the lower end of the larger lake.

The camp was subject to call on any forest fire that broke out in that part of the state. Harry spent 32 days fighting the Sheep Mountain fire in the rugged country of central Idaho in 1934. The crew went by truck to Yellow Pine, then by pack train to Sheep Mountain, because there was no road into the area, just rough trails, what they called the Beaver Slide. The crew then walked in carrying their bed rolls and clothing in back packs. It was a hike of almost 15 miles into the timber. When asked if they had any close calls or scary moments, Harry said they were driven into a rocky area by the fire and had to just wait it out until they were able to make it back to camp through the embers.

Another time, Harry told of a fire sweeping up the canyon and wiping out their camp, burning their sleeping bags and even running their cook out of camp just before dinner was ready... leaving them with only cold sandwiches. He also tells of one time when the packer arrived at camp in the evening and the boys helped him unload his supplies. The mules were turned loose in a meadow below the camp for the night. The bell, or lead mule, was killed during the night by a falling snag.

When the fire was over, they went to a camp at Horseshoe Bend, Idaho. This was a road construction camp. From there they built about fifteen miles of road up the canyon. There had been a road there, but it was in bad shape, so they completely rebuilt the road.

Harry was a Local Experienced Man (L.E.M.) in these camps. The LEM's job was to show the boys how to do whatever job they undertook. Knowing the country real well was a great advantage, especially when out on forest fires. He knew the area because he had hunted in these parts for years. Altogether, Harry was in the CCC almost one year, taking his honorable discharge to go to work in a sawmill.

Personal interview with:
Mr. Claude Avery
P.O. Box 22
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Page 1 of 2

February 28, 2002
Thursday 11:00 AM

Prepared by:
Lawrence A. Kingsbury
Heritage Program Manage
USDA Payette National Forest

Claude Avery was born on a farm two miles west of Donnelly, Idaho in 1913. Claude's daughter is Joyce Steckman, a former USDA Payette NF employee who retired in circa 1995.

Claude joined the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in January 1932 and worked with them for three months. There were two CCC camps in the area of Riggins, Idaho, Camp 106 and 107. Claude was at Camp 106 at Riggins, near the confluence of the Little Salmon River and the Main Salmon River. Camp 107 was at French Creek.

While with CCC, Claude ran a jackhammer. He hung from a rope, over the Bird Creek Rock ledge drilling holes for a distance of 18 to 20 feet. A carload of black powder was packed into the holes and detonated at once. They blew up a lot of rock while building the Salmon River road. After three months, Claude became employed with the Idaho National Forest.

C. S. Scribner was the Idaho National Forest Supervisor from 1926 to 1936

Hank M. Shank was Forest Supervisor from 1937 thru 1940.

J. W. Farrell was Forest Supervisor from 1941 thru 1945.

The Idaho National Forest was named after the state. Because of some confusion with the Idaho Department of Forestry, the name was changed with the reorganization and consolidation of the Weiser and Idaho National Forests. The newly reorganized forest became the Payette National Forest on April 1st, 1944.

Claude began his employment with the Idaho National Forest in 1934. He said that he "did a little of everything."

In 1934 he was sent to Split Creek Fire Lookout. This lookout is a 72 foot high Aeromotor steel tower, called a "Lightning rod" by the people who were stationed in them. The Forest Service supplied Claude with rations. The packer piled the food upon the floor of the Rocky Mountain style log cabin residence. He stayed at that lookout for 90 days. During his first day in the fire lookout, he learned to use the fire alidade in a telephone conversation with dispatcher Slim Vasser.

After his tour of duty as fire lookout Claude worked with the pack strings. The Lakefork District had a string of 10 mules and horses. From about 1934 to 1945, the forest had 95 mules, 15 saddle horses, and 10 bell mares. Most bell mares were white in color. However, there was one that was black and one that was a bay.

Chamberlain, Krassel and new Meadows Districts had five mules each.

Many of the men rode their own saddle horses. Claude had a little black horse he called "Shorty." Claude said that he was well trained...

"Shorty would stay right where I left him. If I left him on the trail while I was sawing a log, not even a wolf nor a coyote could scare him. He was sure a good horse."

The Forest Service livestock wintered at the Thompson Ranch of the South Fork of the Salmon River for three or four winters. The livestock also wintered over in Ola, Idaho.

Sometime after World War II, when helicopters started coming around, the Forest Service started getting rid of the livestock. In 2001 there were only 16 mules and horses remaining on the Payette NF.

Around in 1942, Claude became the alternate ranger at the Lakefork and Paddy Flats Districts.

J. G. Kooch was Forest Supervisor from 1942 to 1944.

J. W. Farrell was Forest Supervisor from 1941 to 1945.

Around in 1945, Claude began working as a forester. He walked on webs on snow, cruised timber and scaled logs.

T. Mathews became Forest Supervisor from 1946 to 1949.

Around in 1950, Claude changed jobs and became the Forest Carpenter. During this time he helped to build bridges and several fire lookout buildings such as Williams Peak, War Eagle, and Pilot Peak.

J.G. Kooch returned to be Forest Supervisor a second time from 1950 to 1957.

S. E. Defler became Forest Supervisor from 1958 to 1969.

In 1970, after 34 years of continuous USDA Forest Service duty, Claude Avery retired and he resides in McCall, Idaho. At 89 years of age he is still getting around quit well.

W. D. Sendt became Forest Supervisor from 1970 to 1980.

CONCLUSION

During the CCC era, what is now the Payette National Forest substantially benefited. In less than nine years, the CCC took approximately 3.5 million unemployed men, many World War I veterans, and made them productive. As a consequence of the CCC program, hundreds of thousands of acres were added to the National Forest system under the provisions of the Weeks Law and the Clarke-McNary Act. The major accomplishments of the CCC work program included (USDA 1983):

- 89,000 miles of telephone line installed
- 126,000 miles of roads and trails constructed
- 6,459,000 man-days spent fighting fires
- 6,660,000 erosion control check dams built
- 21,000,000 acres treated in tree planting, pest control, and disease control.
- 2,356,000,000 trees planted

The CCC was never abolished legally, but as World War II approached, the young men of the country were called to the war effort, and the program was phased out in 1942. However, the training these men received was invaluable. One example of the significance this program had on the men was the fact that all of the five-star generals of World War II were in some way involved with the CCC.

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