

The New Deal and the Old Frontier: American Identity, Environmental Design, and the Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933–42

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The New Deal and the Old Frontier

*American Identity, Environmental Design, and the
Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933–42*

JAMES J. FORTUNA

Abstract

As a flagship program of the New Deal, the CCC was one of several federal agencies which turned to the natural and built environment to promote socio-cultural homogenization between the First and Second World War. This article investigates the CCC's role as an agent of national transformation and considers the links between the New Deal's treatment of the American landscape and its promotion of a new, more pluralistic national identity. While historians of the interwar United States are quick to note the social and environmental significance of the CCC, the cultural role of this program remains largely overlooked. Specifically, relevant scholarship has neglected to address the architectural output of this program and the way it related to the New Deal's broader socio-cultural initiatives. With camps in each of the forty-eight states and overseas territories, the CCC reconfigured much of the American landscape and deployed a regionally diverse blend of vernacular architecture, all while fostering a mythologized sense of cultural heritage from coast to coast. In order to better understand both the role and rationale behind this process, this article considers several examples of CCC-produced architecture and landscape design across the greater United States. It argues that these designs were key vehicles of the unifying message that drove the New Deal and its many so-called 'alphabet agencies' from the depths of economic depression to a state of preparedness as the country approached the precipice of global war. This article also considers the Corps' role in the New Deal's construction of popular historical consciousness and draws attention to the frequent transregional interactions between enrollees and local populations.

"In the settlement of America we have to observe how European life entered the continent, and how America modified and developed that life and reacted on Europe . . . The frontier is the line of most

rapid and effective Americanization. The wilderness masters the colonist. It finds him a European in dress, industries, tools, modes of travel, and thought. It takes him from the railroad car and puts him in the birch canoe. It strips off the garments of civilization and arrays him in the hunting shirt and the moccasin. It puts him in the log cabin of the Cherokee and Iroquois and runs an Indian palisade around him . . . In short, at the frontier the environment is at first too strong for the man. He must accept the conditions which it furnishes, or perish, and so he fits himself into the Indian clearings and follows the Indian trails. Little by little he transforms the wilderness; but the outcome is not the old Europe . . . The fact is, that here is a new product that is American."

—Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," delivered at the 1893 Meeting of the American Historical Association in Chicago

"Thus we are influenced by the early settlers, English and Dutch, along the Atlantic seaboard; something of Old France lingers along the trail of Pere Marquette and the fur traders. Reaching up from New Orleans, Florida, and Old Mexico, Spanish traditions and customs rightfully flourish. Over the covered wagon routes the ring of the pioneer's axe is echoed in the efforts of today. The habits and primitive ingenuity of the American Indian persist and find varied expression over wide areas. Interpreted with intelligence, these influences promise an eventual park and recreation architecture, which, outside certain sacrosanct areas, need not cringe before a blanket indictment for 'unlawful entry.'"

—Albert H. Good, Architectural Advisor, State Parks Division, National Park Service, 1938.¹

INTRODUCTION

Deep within the Ocala National Forest of north-central Florida, a mill-house churns the crystal-clear water of Juniper Springs. Beneath a canopy of soaring palms and scrub pines, the hand-hewn timber frame building flanks a 10,800 square-foot natural pool. For more than eighty years, the mill's undershot waterwheel has kept steady time amidst the variety of life that surrounds it. Since the pool opened to the public in

the midst of the Great Depression, this scene has replayed every day without pause and serves as a characteristic reminder of the transformative power of the Civilian Conservation Corps.

Upon its completion in September 1935, the mill was able to convert the flow of this second magnitude spring into enough electric power to service the entire Juniper Springs Recreation Area, an eighty-acre park created by “Roosevelt’s Tree Army” one year before. Today, this unheralded source of hydroelectric power is just one of the many CCC-built structures remaining on federal, state, or municipal land. One of the earliest federal relief agencies created during President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s famous ‘first one hundred days,’ the Emergency Conservation Work Program, as the CCC was officially known until 1937, was established in April 1933 to relieve “the acute condition of widespread distress and unemployment” inherited by the Roosevelt administration following the landslide electoral defeat of Republican incumbent Herbert Hoover in 1932.² Working under the aegis of the War Department, director Robert Fechner, a former representative of the Tennessee Machinists’ Union, successfully met Roosevelt’s springtime challenge to have the first “300,000 men in the woods before the Fourth of July.”³

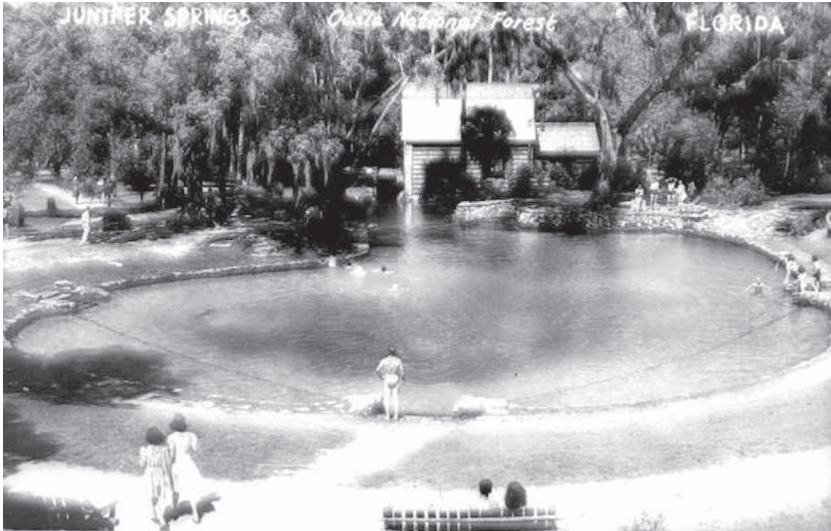


Figure 1: “View of the mill across the spring,” photograph of postcard, c.1940, General Collection, State Library and Archives of Florida.

Despite its focus on environmental conservation, the organization was branded, above all, as an economic recovery program. Yet throughout its nine-year existence, the Corps also played a much larger role within the New Deal-era initiative to unite the country along socio-cultural lines.⁴ In the program's first four years, the CCC employed close to two million economically disadvantaged, unmarried young men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five. During their standard six-month term of service the majority of these men worked forty hours per week and forwarded some \$400,000 in combined earnings (roughly four-fifths of their total monthly \$30 paycheck) home to their families.⁵ Though just over half of the enrollees were drawn from impoverished rural settings, the program was billed as a right of American citizenship and drew heavily on more diverse urban populations typically made up of first and second generation immigrant families. By the time the Corps was abolished in 1942, 2.5 million black men had also passed through its ranks, and at any one time, the CCC benefitted from the participation of no less than ten-thousand Native Americans and 50,000 so-called "territorials" based at the several CCC camps built in Hawaii, Alaska, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.⁶ Each of these men had a role in the planting of more than two billion trees, erection of some 40,000 park buildings, stringing of at least 50,000 miles of telephone wire, and construction of over 80,000 miles of truck trails and minor roads across the thousands of acres of newly developed state-protected park and forest land.⁷

For an agency which has generally been cast and committed to popular memory in the most flattering of lights, significant questions remain regarding not only its legacy, but also the ways in which it fit into the larger constellation of contemporary New Deal programs designed to mobilize wide cross-sections of the American population between the First and Second World Wars. Like the National Recovery Administration (NRA), Works Progress Administration (WPA), and many others, the CCC was an important arm of what Ira Katznelson has called the procedural and "crusading face" of "a new national state."⁸ The Corps was a critical element of the government's multifaceted efforts to reinforce, if not author an entirely new, American identity which was to be pluralistic in scope and embrace ethnic, regional, and even racial differences from coast to coast to an unprecedented, if also sometimes

inconsistent, degree. In direct contrast to the embrace of fascist ethnic nationalism in other parts of the Old World, New Deal leadership sought a new ‘American way,’ one which drew on the country’s strength as a diverse and democratic collective.⁹ Despite the often harsh realities of everyday life on Indian reservations, in urban areas, and across the racially segregated Jim Crow south, ‘unity amidst diversity’ reverberated as a Progressive rallying cry. As a key ingredient to what Gary Gerstle has described as a tradition of “civic nationalism,” traceable within the United States at least as far as the first President Roosevelt, this inclusive outlook was intended to rapidly Americanize a varied and spatially disjointed population.¹⁰

Though it remains difficult to gauge exactly how Americans came to internalize this state-administered national concept, the top-down effort at horizontal integration can be read against the structures, landscapes, and interpersonal interactions it came to yield. This article will evaluate the CCC’s role in the formation of American identity throughout the interwar period. While satisfactory treatment of such a topic might demand a more comprehensive, book-length study, this short analysis will attempt to lay the foundations for such a study through consideration of a number of overlooked CCC structures erected in both the conterminous and noncontiguous United States between 1933–42.

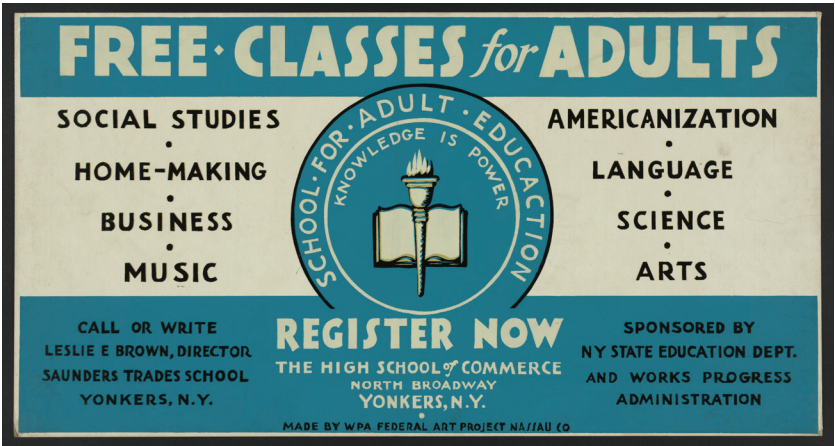


Figure 2: WPA poster advertising free ‘Americanization classes’ at the School for Adult Education, The High School of Commerce, North Broadway, Yonkers, New York, 1939. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington D.C.

In investigating these structures specifically, and the CCC experience more broadly, it will reveal the myriad of ways in which the Corps' work as an agent of environmental and landscape transformation was analogous to the New Deal's larger efforts to instill a pan-regional sense of national identity. To do so, it draws from a variety of discounted sources, including the heritage documentation data collected in several Historic American Buildings Surveys (HABS), Historic American Landscapes Surveys (HALS), and Historic American Engineering Surveys (HAES). In addition to architectural guides and yearbooks published by the National Park Service, local periodicals from across the continental United States and its territories, *Happy Days*, the CCC's official national newspaper, the article also incorporates some of the several individual camp newsletters which were written by enrollees themselves and published semi-regularly with the help of camp educational staff across the country.

In arguing that the CCC's commitment to environmental design was a nationalizing force, this study first calls attention to the Corps' attempts to construct park buildings in a 'quintessentially American' style. Several geographically disparate case studies will reflect the ways in which CCC architecture, subordinated to federal oversight and inspired by a national ideal, came to be informed by regional traditions and promote a new sense of citizenship and identity. Across the country, the Corps' use of native materials, reliance on local expertise, and invocation of romantic notions of a folkloric past worked to enshrine a vernacular mode within the more pronounced language of New Deal design. I have identified several which I feel adequately represent the CCC's mission and nationalizing architectural style. The decision to include several lesser known structures reflects a desire to draw attention to sites that have yet to be listed for historic preservation or recorded in federal architectural surveys. Many have enjoyed second or even third lives and are in regular use today, but others are in serious danger of falling into complete disrepair. The second section of this study will demonstrate how the very act of building such structures under federal direction lent symbolic value to historic forms and spaces. The Corps' reliance on a self-described 'pioneer rustic' style complimented the New Deal's monumentalization of civil war battlefields, presidential homesteads, and other places of historic significance. These efforts were critical to the Roosevelt adminis-

tration's ability to promote the powerful sense of a shared national past which united Americans regardless of region, economic status, cultural background, or political disposition. Finally, in drawing attention to the variety of ways the Corps actually facilitated direct interaction between regionally diverse groups of corpsmen and local communities, this article will challenge the prevailing notion that the success of the CCC was related to the isolation of its enrollees. Several examples, from Hawaii to New Hampshire, will demonstrate that such interaction was actually fundamental to the Corps' role as a nationalizing force.

The number of books and articles related to various aspects of the CCC is considerable and continues to grow by the year. The trouble with the broad historical treatment of the Corps thus far lies not so much in the content, but in the goal of these studies. Rather than offer another history which considers the Corps in strictly social, political, or environmental terms, I propose that we shift our focus and begin to think about the CCC in cultural terms. This analysis not only represents an alternative approach for historians of the Corps, but, perhaps most importantly, also offers an equally novel approach to anybody with an interest in disentangling the links between the nationalizing mission of the New Deal and one of its flagship relief programs.

To be sure, historians of various backgrounds and disciplines have done much to improve our understanding of the Corps' origin, function, and legacy. Neil Maher's *Nature's New Deal* provides an important overview of the Corps' ecological impact.¹¹ Eric Gorham's excoriation of the Corps and its "ambiguous (social) practices," though severe, remains a valuable contribution, not least for its application of Foucauldian theory onto a nuanced reading of the daily routines and spatial organization of the standardized camps.¹² In interpreting typical CCC practices as scaled examples of "the normalizing potential of a democratic state," Gorham was one of the first to turn to the CCC in serious examination of what he called the "micropolitics" of New Deal Labor practices.¹³ In doing so, he subjected one of the more popular, widely beloved, and heavily romanticized New Deal programs to stark criticism and helped clear a path for the work of scholars such as Melissa Bass, who has subjected the Corps to further scrutiny in an attempt to gauge the social and civic value of the Corps.¹⁴ Though Bass has concluded that the CCC was more of a *democratic* than *populist* success,

she has noted that the Corps, in excluding women and segregating camps along racial lines, was 'fundamentally limited in its democratic scope.'¹⁵ Since John Salmond and Donald Parman offered their own landmark assessments, similar observations have informed studies of the black and native American experience in CCC camps. But there remains considerable work to be done before historians can feel comfortable in their understanding of the CCC's role in facilitating racial or transcultural integration.¹⁶ Holly Allen's recent book-length study of Progressive Era cultural politics focuses considerable attention on the CCC, but makes no assessment of the Corps' building practices. In fact, Allen only appraises the cultural role of the Corps in so far as she sees it fit into her broader interpretation of the New Deal's socio-cultural agenda. Still, her study of 'CCC storytelling' has shed light on the methods by which enrollees were inculcated with a sense of civic-national responsibility and local awareness, irrespective of a given company's origin.¹⁷ Local histories of the Corps also abound, and several will be addressed presently. But while such geographically focused scholarship should continue to be encouraged, it is time that many of these regional accounts come to be mapped onto the larger, national picture. For as much as the Civilian Conservation Corps was an agent of environmental and social change at the regional level, it was also a tremendous weapon in the Rooseveltian arsenal of broader democratization and cultural assimilation. There remains ample space for the cultural historian to apply these studies, none more important than the other, to a timely analysis of the CCC's role in the formation of New Deal-authored American identity. The CCC may be remembered as "one of America's most significant undertakings in social welfare," but it was also tantamount to a cultural crusade.¹⁸

CCC ARCHITECTURE: BUILDING THE NEW AMERICAN CITIZEN

Phoebe Cutler's *Public Landscape of the New Deal*, more than thirty-five years old at time of writing, remains one of the principal studies of the Roosevelt administration's built legacy.¹⁹ Its John Brinckerhoff Jackson-inspired reading of the official landscape of the interwar United States is an excellent launching point for students of New Deal Era landscape architecture, park planning, or infrastructural design.

Necessarily, the Corps makes an appearance in Cutler's volume, but is ultimately forced to share the spotlight with other agencies, especially the PWA, WPA, and Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), each of which were assigned their own role in the transformation of the American landscape under New Deal leadership. By focusing more specifically on the CCC's architectural output, we can make better sense of the ways it forged a link between place, history, and identity.

In 1938, the National Park Service (NPS) published its three-volume *Park and Recreation Structures* under the authority of the Department of the Interior (DOI).²⁰ In the foreword to what Cutler has called the "bible of rural and wilderness design," NPS Director Arno B. Cammerer attributed the significant progress made in the way of "safe, convenient, and beneficial" structural design in natural parks directly to the CCC.²¹ On Fechner's authority, publication of this edition was underwritten by the Corps and the federal vision of a "truly liberal evolution" of "the natural park idea" was codified across its 655 pages.²² According to the volume's primary contributor Albert H. Good, who worked as an architectural consultant for the NPS, one of the main factors influencing this evolution was the "distribution of population . . . and tardy realization that important among conservational responsibilities of parks was the human crop."²³ The volume makes clear that in designing these new structures to blend into their surroundings, the DOI and CCC were acting on a shared commitment to make each building an instructive point of reference for the Americans tasked with its construction. Every building, like every enrollee, was to be wholly subordinated to its environment. This site-specific pattern of subordination, Good explained, would go a long way in yielding a "satisfying expression" of unity.²⁴

"GOVERNMENT RUSTIC," OR, "THE VIRTUE OF BEING NATIVE"

While representatives of the Office of Supervising Architect and Public Works Administration quarreled in Washington for the right to lend a dominant hand to Progressive leadership's pursuit of a distinctly American architectural style, the CCC continued to act on its own charge to foster a commonality of culture and social identity from coast to coast.²⁵ With great rapidity, the CCC played its part in lending solid form to abstract notions of American culture, heritage, and

identity. The objective was to create “an indigenous architecture free of Old World dictates.”²⁶ By building in what was known as a ‘government rustic style,’ and channeling the energies of “pioneer craftsmen with limited handtools,” Corps architects endeavored to achieve “sympathy with natural (American) surroundings and with the (American) past.”²⁷ CCC design was part of the federal campaign to engender a distinctly American creative ethos that WPA muralist (and personal friend of FDR) George Biddle identified as “democratic, social, and anonymous, rather than aristocratic, esthetic, and snobbish.”²⁸ While Douglas Brinkley regards the Adirondack School as the single most profound influence on the government rustic style, in the CCC’s penchant for pronounced horizontal lines and an Arts and Crafts-type embrace of solid proportions and simple, ordinary materials, Phoebe Cutler places the CCC’s key stylistic inspiration a bit further west with the Prairie School of landscape architecture and design.²⁹ In this way, Cutler argues, the styles made famous by Englishmen Ruskin and Morris came to be “Americanized through a hearty dose of Crockett and Boone,” legendary nineteenth-century Appalachian frontiersmen and folk heroes known across the country as tireless defenders of the people.³⁰ Regardless of where the “government rustic” style may have originated, it was clear where it was going. Under the consistent influence of rarely credited “Local Experience Men,” Roosevelt’s pancontinental “chain” of CCC companies linked regional traditions from every corner of the country to the emergent thrust of a nationally inflected vernacular architecture. Through the “intelligent use” of local materials, thoughtfully scaled structures were raised without sacrificing “the virtue of being native.”³¹ Like the CCC itself, its buildings were “to be all things to all men, tempting the devotees of nature and of the past.”³²

THE CONSTRUCTION OF DEMOCRATIC PERFORMANCE SPACE: CCC AMPHITHEATERS

Few elements of CCC architectural production exude the cultural ethos described by WPA man Biddle as clearly as the dozens of Greek-style amphitheaters built around the country between 1933–42. On state-owned land in places such as Brown County State Park in Indiana, the Angeles National Forest in California, Zion National Park in Utah, and

the Sweetwater Recreation Area in Texas, corpsmen constructed new communal spaces out of nearby stone and earth. Sometimes, in the fashion of ancient Greece, these sites were built directly into the natural slope of a local hill or mountain, oriented so as to treat audiences to scenic vistas and capture every possible acoustic advantage. Elsewhere, these spaces were more intimate and could host no more than thirty people at a time. The most famous of the CCC-built amphitheaters, those of Mt Tamalpais State Park in California, city of Denver-owned Red Rocks in Colorado, and the Waterside Theater at Fort Raleigh National Historic Site on Roanoke Island in North Carolina, are still in use today and remain able to accommodate a combined total of more than 17,000 visitors per performance. With very few interruptions, the Waterside Theater has continuously run Paul Green's Federal Theater Project-funded play, *The Lost Colony*, every week since 1937, making it the only surviving production of New Deal-funded live theater. These federally sponsored performance spaces, designed to facilitate the transmission of state-authored American ideals and a distinctly American identity, remain overlooked, yet no doubt integral, elements of the New Deal's far-reaching cultural apparatus. Further research into how exactly these spaces were animated (both before and during wartime) would prove a valuable contribution to the emergent body of literature concerned with the cultural politics of the CCC.³³

PARK ADMINISTRATION AND RECREATION BUILDINGS

Glacier Ranger Station, Mt Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, Washington

Along a bend in the Mt Baker Highway which winds through the Mt Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest of northwest Washington, stands Glacier Ranger Station. At a cost of \$2500, the CCC completed its construction in 1938, after which time it remained the administrative headquarters (and residence) of the Glacier ranger district until it was converted for use as a visitor's center in 1984. The cruciform, single-story wood frame building sits atop a poured concrete foundation and beneath a cross gable roof of cedar shake.³⁴ Emblematic of the architectural style preferred by interwar federal agencies of the Pacific

Northwest, the ranger station's andesite masonry is similar to that found elsewhere along the Mt Baker Highway.³⁵ Use of this volcanic stone lends the structure an environmentally congruous hue, while its chimney, covered entryways, sheltered porches, and pitched roof is well suited to its home in the extreme northwestern corner of the country. The large masonry columns which punctuate the portico at the station's main, north-facing façade, are also composed of andesite, as are the curved masonry walls which flank the building on its east and west. Behind the station's multi-paned windows, dark-stained Douglas-fir paneling covers the walls of the lobby and eastside room, while the other walls are composed of masonry veneer and weatherboard. According to a January 1991 federal survey of the site, the majority of the former ranger station's masonry work was overseen by a 'local experience man,' while CCC foremen supervised the framing, roofing, and finishing work performed by Corps enrollees.



Figure 3: General view of Glacier Ranger Station, Mt Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, Washington. From Library of Congress, Washington D.C., HABS WA-192-3, July 1988.

Complexes: O'Leno State Park, Florida and Mt Greylock State Reserve, Massachusetts

Meanwhile, within a hardwood hammock at the opposite corner of the country, stands the complex of structures which lend a distinctly southern character to O'Leno State Park, one of the nine state parks the CCC managed to build across the Florida peninsula before 1942. Built amongst the solution sinkholes, river swamps, and sandhills of a small town named High Springs, O'Leno remains a popular destination for its so-called "river sink," a stretch of Florida which sees the Santa Fe River dip below ground before reappearing some three miles south at a different state park, River Rise Preserve.³⁶ The natural land bridge created by this phenomenon is imbued with regionally specific historical significance. It was this bridge which made possible the completion of Bellamy Road, Florida's first federal highway. The nineteenth-century path was built along the Spanish Colonial Royal Road which linked St Augustine to Tallahassee and itself followed an existing Native American trail.³⁷ Unsurprisingly, given its natural-historical role, the state showed keen interest in the acquisition of this site, and the area was originally slated for use as a training camp by the Florida Board of Forestry. Under the direction of the federal government, however, it was transformed into a public recreation zone in the mid-1930s. Within the park's 6,000 acres remain unmistakable signs of CCC presence.

In 1936, CCC Co. P-67 and Co. 418 arrived to complete the work that had been started by a WPA unit comprised of local unemployed men. Under the guidance of state landscape architect Emmett Hill, however, the CCC companies quickly supplemented the existing complex of structures with several of their own, including a painted and stenciled Arts and Crafts-style dining hall, a suspension bridge, small amphitheater, and a stone museum building intended to offer an authoritative historical interpretation of this site's significance. Although much of the stone used to construct many New Deal park buildings and structures across Florida came from O'Leno's open pit limestone quarry, this site struggles to attract much attention. At time of writing, the buildings of O'Leno State Park remain unlisted and unprotected by the same federal government which oversaw their construction.

The centerpiece of the largest New Deal era complex to have been erected in Southern New England overlooks the natural valley separating the Berkshire Mountains of Massachusetts from the Green Mountains of Vermont. Surrounded on all sides by ancient red spruce and the only taiga boreal forest in Massachusetts, Bascom Lodge crowns the 3,489-foot Mount Greylock, the Bay State's highest peak. Unlike the more monumental Veterans War Memorial Tower built the same year under the direction of a Boston architectural firm, the 1932 construction of Bascom Lodge relied heavily on the use of schist fieldstone and timber harvested from nearby oak glades. Similar stone and timber construction can be found in the CCC-constructed Thunderbolt Ski Shelter, set a few miles further along the Appalachian Trail in the same reserve. The relevant CCC builders and lead local experience man Joseph McArthur Vance would be pleased to know that the structures built atop Mount Greylock have continued to see steady use since their erection more than eighty years ago. Intended as permanent structures, the buildings discussed thus far may unjustly skew our analysis of the CCC's material record in the direction of state sanctioned monumentality. The following case studies will train our attention on the more utilitarian structures erected by the Corps which, in defiance of official expectations, remain in use today.

Prefabricated or Temporary Structures

As the first district office built in the Monongahela National Forest of West Virginia, the Cheat District Ranger Office is remarkable more for its function than its form. In hosting visiting researchers and foresters typically based at the Appalachian Experimental Station in Ashville, North Carolina, the Cheat District complex served in a quasi-diplomatic capacity. Known for its easy access to the Elk Lick watershed, the complex would have differed from its Carolinian counterpart in that each of its buildings were constructed using materials available from within the Monongahela National Forest, including the now critically endangered American chestnut tree. The ranger office is unique amongst the bunkhouses, workshops and structures which surround it for its hip roof, enclosed soffit, and lack of corner boards.³⁸

Also expected to satisfy immediate needs in a temporary capacity was Chisos Basin Store, a t-shaped adobe structure built in a vaguely Spanish style as part of a larger, thematically uniform complex in Big Bend National Park, Texas during 1941. Its two modest rooms were intended to serve as the camp store and part-time living quarters for Corpsmen of rank.³⁹ The building's roughly coursed limestone foundation is held together with a simple mud mortar and its stuccoed walls of 10x15-inch adobe bricks were laid in common bond and butt-jointed, rather than keyed into each other at the corners. The store's gable and shed roofs constitute low-sloped and intersecting wings from which a rounded adobe chimney arises on the north-facing side. As ever, CCC designers were attuned to the site-specific demands of this structure, and while the store's ten windows flood the interior with natural light, its recessed porch offers considerable shade from the hot sun of southwestern Texas. The structural integrity of this building is underscored by the mere existence of the two so-called 'Dallas huts' erected some-



Figure 4: Chisos Basin Store, Big Bend National Park, Texas. Perspective view from Northwest Corner. From Library of Congress, Washington D.C., HABS TX-3399-2.

time in the postwar years which were, ostensibly, also intended to serve a temporary function. Erected on a concrete slab foundation, these wood frame and plywood buildings have aged much faster and mar, rather than compliment, the surrounding natural landscape

These specific case studies were selected to illustrate the scope, composition, and regional awareness behind the design of typical CCC structures erected between 1933–42. This was merely a small sampling, but careful explication of further architectural examples from around the country can detach these structures from their typically dominant regional character and situate them within a broader, *national* framework. Because they were built on federally protected land by men of diverse cultural backgrounds from different parts of the country and eventually visited by a variety of American tourists and scientists, their regionally coded styles can be understood as contributions to an all-embracing sense of *national* character and as having directly contributed to the formation of a new, more pluralistic American identity. In this way, these CCC buildings represent the relationship between New Deal socio-cultural policy and architectural design.

Still, several worthwhile examples have been excluded here. The CCC's construction of additional sleeping quarters and rain collecting cisterns at the Bluebeard Castle Hotel in the Virgin Islands, for instance, represents one of the finest examples of the way that the Corps' work often blurred the lines between architecture and engineering and was neither tied directly to the New Deal promotion of intranational tourism nor infrastructural improvement. Similarly, the Saville Dam in Barkhamsted, Connecticut still stands as a reminder of the federal government's ability to meet local need with regional flare. In the deep south, the Mountain Bunker Tower at Alabama's Cheaha State park exemplifies the Corps' ability to build in a decidedly monumental tone while still using local materials, in this case native rubblestone. The Scandinavian style notch and groove log structure built to serve as the headquarters of Chippewa National Forest in Minnesota evidences the Corps' acute understanding of region-specific cultural heritage as well as its willingness to incorporate certain old-world practices into the construction of high-profile federal spaces. The Saddlehorn Caretaker's Residence at the Colorado National Monument represents



Figure 5: Saville Dam, Barkhamsted, Connecticut. Photo by Joseph Fortuna.

a similar dynamic but relied on native red sandstone instead of timber. According to *Work*, the official organ of the WPA, the CCC was also instrumental in the erection of hurricane-proof housing across Puerto Rico which was intended to ensure the continuation of traditional agrarian practices in the territory's tobacco, coffee, and citrus-producing regions.⁴⁰

ROADS

Also critical to the CCC's efforts to nationalize the American landscape was its treatment of public roads in and around national or state park land. By 1932, some twenty-three million cars were registered within the United States.⁴¹ Decades of historical scholarship has documented the centrality of this increased mobility to the New Deal's commitment to the promotion of tourism.⁴² More than promote economic recovery, though, this interstate travel also stimulated a greater sense of national awareness. In the summer of 1935, when several CCC companies were

sent to the furthest reaches of northern California to complete a stretch of highway which would eventually be known as the Redwood National and State Park Road system, one Corps official reported that “tourist traffic on the Redwood Highway has been quite heavy during the month of July. Licenses from every state in the Union have been noted passing this camp with three exceptions: Alabama, Louisiana, and Delaware.”⁴³ In this context, American identity can again be understood to have been directly informed by lived experience, specifically, experience away from home.

While the Corps worked to clear timber and debris from the side of freshly constructed roads along the Pacific coast, it also added spilt rail fencing, guard posts, bridges and puncheon signage. But some 2,300 miles across the Pacific, the California-based corpsmen’s Hawaiian counterparts were engaged in similarly intensive methods of nation building on land that was yet to be officially incorporated into the United States. The corpsmen assigned to the camps at Hawaii Volcanoes National Park aided the construction of roads which facilitated tourism and ecological research in areas that had long been impassable thanks to the island’s steep and often unstable terrain. Along the Uwekahuna Bird Park Road, the Corps controlled erosion through the introduction of wide shoulders, stone drainage gutters, ditches, and riprap. Corpsmen built stonework culvert headwalls and lava rock masonry guard walls along both Crater Rim Drive and the scenic overlook of Keanākako’i Crater. While fastening what federal surveyors described in 1999 as some of “the best remaining examples” of shoulder stonework in the entire park system, corpsmen also removed alien species of plants and trees, thus giving native vegetation a chance to stabilize.⁴⁴ Besides roadwork, CCC crews in 1938 built both a museum along the Mauna Loa Truck Trail and an eight-sided stone shelter which still serves as an interpretative center and local bird exhibit. That the projects on the Big Island were some of the first and longest running of any CCC company (including those on the mainland) suggests the importance of the corps’ work to the fashioning of a supraregional American identity. FDR himself paid a visit to the National Park in 1934, and even after the bombing of Pearl Harbor on the neighboring island of Oahu in December 1941, park rangers continued to lead auto tours along several of these roads. Today, the former CCC camp facilities serve as the national park’s research center.



Figure 6: Franklin D. Roosevelt at the rim of Halemaumau Crater. Featured in "Superintendent's Monthly Report," July 1934. Library of Congress, Washington D.C., HI-47-3.

THE HISTORICIST NATURE OF THE CCC

Besides promoting a sense of ownership over new structures and their immediate surroundings, the construction process also imbued CCC enrollees with a sense of ownership over historical time and place. The CCC's role in the rehabilitation of a national historical consciousness has been unduly ignored. This sense of a shared past lent the national narrative of the New Deal the "emotional legitimacy" it sought in its attempts to establish a lasting foothold within hearts and minds that would give credence to the "American melting pot" idea.⁴⁵

Through a "humble respect for the past," corpsmen were taught to "become aware of the unvoiced claims of those long-gone races and earlier generations that tracked the wilderness, plains, or desert before us."⁴⁶ As Good explained in his guide to park design, this vaguely understood, deeply mythologized, and pseudo-homologous past informed much of the architectural features found in federally organized wilderness spaces. Each structure built to adorn these official landscapes signaled an attempt to showcase agencies such as the Corps' role in

furthering the as-yet incomplete civilizing mission of those 'long-gone races' through "adaptation of their traditions and practices."⁴⁷ Within the context of the New Deal United States, this civilizing mission was geared toward a specific process of Americanization. It is clear that the wilderness spaces accented and organized by the CCC had always been monumental in scope in purpose.

Accordingly, down from an even higher platform came the similar words of Harold Ickes, one of only two people to serve in Roosevelt's administration across all four terms.⁴⁸ Evidencing a plain understanding of the unifying potential of a national park system that served both rhetorical and recreational purposes, Ickes used the phrases 'national park' and 'national monument' interchangeably. In the preface to the 1940 National Park Service yearbook entitled "Parks and Peace," for example, Ickes remarked that "in the wilderness beauties of our national monuments, we have living pictures of the great past of our country, landmarks to show the road we have travelled and to point out the path that leads into the future. In these areas and in the growing numbers of state, county, and municipal parks throughout the Nation, we give our people unique and happy fortifications against unrest and war."⁴⁹ More than federally furnished spaces of domestic refuge capable of providing a respite from the grim realities of foreign war, these nationalized wilderness sites were also designed to offer immersive, unifying history lessons, representative of federal leadership's power to promote a dominate historical narrative. The New Deal's treatment of these spaces evidences significant interest in using *national* parks to promote a national identity through the mobilization of a sense of collective historical memory and a shared past. The actual content of this shared history was secondary to the simple fact that it was shared at all, and thus tethered all Americans, irrespective of background or region, to the same fate. The transformation of public lands, underpinned by the widespread press coverage generated by persistent official commentary on such activity, in turn spurred on significant sociocultural transformation.

This effort, though articulated most clearly in the design of new cabins and lodges, was also visible in the Corps' treatment of preexisting historically significant spaces. With the stroke of a pen on August 10, 1933, scores of national monuments and heritage sites around the coun-

try were turned over from the War Department and Forest Service to the control of the National Park Service.⁵⁰ Executive Order 6166 emancipated these sites from the regionalized, (sometimes state by state or even private), guardianship to which they had long been subjected, and placed the burden of their care squarely on the desk of the President. This consolidation of authority facilitated the administration of infrastructural improvements on many of the sites and several were promptly made more visitor friendly thanks, in no small part, to the labors of the CCC. Within months, visitor centers were erected, walking paths and benches were laid out, and new roads were paved through Civil War battlefields which had been endangered by neglect, advance of nearby commercial interests, and, in many cases, urban sprawl. Many of these roads were built along battle lines held by either Union or Confederate regiments, and a driving tour through these parks became a tour through the national imagination. In their broad curves, roadside memorials, and frequent pull-offs, the roads were fashioned so as to lend themselves to reflection and full appreciation of the local area's natural beauty. In these reimagined 'National Military Parks,' Americans were invited to walk the same grounds they had read about in grade school, seen commemorated during Main Street parades, or heard discussed around the family table. As Civil War veterans or other progenitors of local historical lore died off, the state filled the narrative void by introducing different types of interpretative signage across the battlefields-turned-parks. Through direct interaction with these historically charged spaces, Americans of all stripes were treated to a federally administered history lesson. From Gettysburg to Vicksburg, impartial monumentalization of fallen Confederate and Union troops was an impactful gesture intended to bridge persistent divides that the realities of everyday life in the Jim Crow south had, in many ways, only aggravated.⁵¹ The invocation of such sacrifices worked to peel away layers of regionally-tinged scar tissue and reveal what Benedict Anderson has famously identified as "the cultural roots of nationalism."⁵² Public reverence of fallen, 'unknown soldiers' quickly became hallmarks of these sites, and those that remain endure as "arresting" emblems of "the modern culture of nationalism."⁵³

At Gettysburg, the federal government grew the existing park exponentially. Besides adding its own roster of paths, the National Park Service oversaw the modification of the existing early twentieth-century

Telford-style roads that, for a time, had been among the finest in the country.⁵⁴ The softening of sharp curves not only created a more naturalistic park landscape, but also accommodated the expected increase in automobile traffic.⁵⁵ At Vicksburg, a site prone to flash flooding, the CCC added a new drainage system which included brick catch basins (concrete gutters were to be avoided “in order to avoid defac[ing] the naturalistic appearance of the landscape”).⁵⁶ The reconditioning of Confederate Avenue there also included the addition of bridges, widening of lanes to accommodate new, larger private vehicles and the resurfacing of roughly seven miles of previously dirt and gravel roads.⁵⁷ The role of two black CCC companies in the restoration of Yorktown National Military Park, however, represents the most obvious example of the Corps’ role in the historicization of public space. Besides adding historical markers, directional signage and interpretive exhibits such as flags and cannons, CCC enrollees were tasked with “restoring” the battlefield area and assisting the efforts of local engineers and historians who decided to resurface the new tour roads with a mixture of marl and seashells so as to reflect their findings in the nineteenth century diaries of civil war era soldiers and tradesmen who passed through the site.⁵⁸

The New Deal’s efforts to cast the nation as a polity formed of “deep, horizontal comradeship” was not limited to fields of battle.⁵⁹ Designation of George Washington Carver’s birthplace as a National Monument gave people a reason to visit Newton County, Missouri, while the new Homestead National Monument in Beatrice, Nebraska, assigned a physical address to the enduring glorification of Manifest Destiny and cultivation of ‘free land’ along the ‘open expanse’ of the American frontier. In a tragically ironic twist, the National Park Service also took to monumentalizing “seventeen-thousand years of continuous human habitation” when it contracted the CCC to help excavate the site designated as Ocmulgee National Monument on the Macon (Georgia) Plateau under the direction of Smithsonian archaeologist Arthur R. Kelly. Across the continent, the CCC was also instrumental in the reconstruction of tribal heritage sites in Ketchikan, Alaska along what came to be known as the Alaska Totem Trail. The Corps’ engagement with these spaces was a direct consequence of the New Deals’ conscious attempts to foster of a new sense of national cohesion and patriotic sentiment through the manipulation of the American landscape. Turning popular

attention to these historical sites was intended to promote a national identity which would prove blind to preexisting regional or ethno-cultural prejudice. The architectural production of the CCC only constitutes a portion of its built legacy. Its construction or modification of official commemorative landscapes serves as equally valuable material evidence of the agency's role in shaping popular historical memory and stimulation of the national imagination.

In general, though, the role of the CCC in facilitating federally directed restoration of culturally significant historical sites around the country remains underexplored. There is much left to understand about the construction practices of the Corps, but its *restoration* of structures also deserve consideration. Sites such as the colonial missions at Tumacácori National Monument in Arizona, a place known for having hosted countless intercultural exchanges (sometimes peaceful, sometimes violent) between Jesuits, Franciscans, O'odham, Yaqui, Apache, and soldiers or settlers of varied national origin, would be a fine place to start. So, too, would be the millhouses of Rock Creek Park in Washington D.C. or that of Alley Spring along the Ozark Scenic Riverway in Missouri. The nineteenth-century dog feed cache and sled storage facility in Denali Borough, Alaska stands as evidence of at least one occasion where the Corps not only successfully refurbished a structure of regional cultural significance, but actually moved it completely. After being repositioned within Mount McKinley National Park, the facility went on to attract a considerable number of visitors during area's regularly held dogsled races.⁶⁰ All over the United States, the New Deal's revival of regional cultural traditions was put on public display through the work of the CCC.

THE CCC'S PROMOTION OF TRANSREGIONAL INTERACTIONS

While the Democratic National Committee sought to frame the CCC in local terms in advance of the 1936 presidential election, the Corps' effects were, in fact, far reaching and promoted direct, intercultural, and transregional interaction. In providing millions of individual Americans the opportunity to associate "with hundreds of other young men on a common ground," enrollees learned to coexist in intensive and unfamiliar environments "with as little friction as possible."⁶¹ In the



Figure 7: General view of Mission San José de Tumacácori from the southwest, Tumacácori National Historical Park (formerly Tumacácori National Monument), Arizona. From Library of Congress, Washington D.C., HABS AZ-3, 1937.



Figure 8: Mount McKinley Headquarters, Dog Feed Cache & Sled Storage, Cantwell, Denali Borough, Alaska. Photo by Jet Lowe. From Library of Congress, Washington D.C., AK-351-I.

words of two former corpsmen, the CCC brought together “farm boys, city boys, (and) mountain boys,” and in many cases offered them “their first exposure to life beyond home, farm, and village.”⁶² Upon their enrollment in the CCC, young men of Scots-Irish descent left the Smoky Mountains of Tennessee to live amongst the alligators and mangroves of Florida. Black men departed from inner-city Chicago and Harlem to build state parks and picnic areas where exploitative sugar mills and plantation houses once stood, while Italian, Polish, and Russian-Americans left the tenements of New York’s Lower East Side to reforest land that had been cleared for failed cattle ranches in Mississippi. Into the snow and ice of Alaska were sent boys who had been raised amid the cornfields of Kansas. Hawaiians were ferried from island to island in order to build roads that would rival those being built simultaneously in Puerto Rico. The scope of the overall program was not limited to recreational initiatives or a war on poverty; it was also a stimulant to social cooperation and the disregard of cultural differences or heterodox behavior learned in upbringing. As illustrated by the twice-daily



Figure 9: Pamphlet, *Local Boy Makes Good!*, 1936. Democratic National Campaign Committee, New York, publisher. 11 3/4 x 8 5/8 inches (30 x 22 centimeters). The Wolfsonian—Florida International University, Miami Beach, Florida, The Mitchell Wolfson, Jr. Collection of Decorative and Propaganda Arts, Promised Gift, WC2008.12.2.8. Photo: David Almeida.

company reunion around the American flag in camps across the country, the overarching objective of all CCC activity was to promote self-identification as an American and a greater understanding of American people, places and history. Consistent interaction with American towns and cities was as important as the consistent interaction with American wildlife and nature in the CCC's quest to facilitate realization of the Rooseveltian goal to create an "unhyphenated America."⁶³

Still, there were numerous complaints filed regarding the Corps' discriminatory enrollment procedures and general camp policies. The majority of these charges decry the inequitable treatment of black corpsmen countrywide.⁶⁴ In some cases, though, the Corps' enforcement of its official policy of segregation actually activated its potential to Americanize populations across state borders. In the winter of 1938, for example, the CCC disregarded Wisconsin Governor Robert 'Fighting Bob' La Follette's petition to integrate camps in his state. As a result, numerous black corpsmen from the greater Milwaukee area were sent to so-called "colored camps" in Illinois.⁶⁵ As the research of John Salmond makes clear, Fechner's office was unmoved by petitions from the Governor's office, Urban League, and even the White House. After the final decision had been made, the director's office received a letter from the Milwaukee Urban League which described the decision as "a decided disappointment." "To (our) knowledge," the letter went on, "there are no units in Wisconsin designated as Italian, Polish, German or Jewish. Therefore we feel it well within the fitness of things to raise the question as to why Negroes are being set aside into so-called Negro Units."⁶⁶ On the opposite end of the country, meanwhile, Company 818 of Phantom Ranch, Arizona regularly assigned the same daily tasks to its corpsmen regardless of ethnicity. According to Robert Audretsch, this company, composed mainly of Arizonans and Texans "always included a few African-Americans," and several performed daily trail work "alongside their white counterparts."⁶⁷ While such examples of integration are limited and do little "to balance the widespread hostility toward (black only) camps," it should be noted that there were at least a few communities around the country that gave credence to Fechner's claim that the CCC "would prove of great moral and spiritual value not only to the young men . . . (but) to the whole country."⁶⁸ The people of Laurens County, Georgia, for example, a community that considered

itself “above prejudice,” went out of their way to ensure that a camp was established there in hopes that the work of the CCC would help stymie the effects of soil erosion.⁶⁹ The predominantly white town of Morton, Mississippi, also approved of plans to build two nearby “colored camps” and predicted that “if other communities could see the high standard of the work accomplished they would be glad to get them instead of some white camps.”⁷⁰

While the NAACP and Urban League offered little official opinion on national CCC matters, at least one influential black leader made a point of visiting camps around the United States and its territories.⁷¹ After agitating executive leadership in Washington by dropping into an Alabama CCC camp unannounced and under misleading (if not entirely false) pretenses, Edgar G. Brown, founder of the National Negro Council and vocal member of Roosevelt’s so-called “black cabinet,” made a much more welcome visit to a CCC camp on the Virgin Islands.⁷² As “one of the outstanding men today in the fight for social justice,” Brown’s visit symbolized the interconnectedness of not only the mainland and territorial black community, but also of that community to the New Deal vision of a new democratic nationhood.⁷³ Perhaps less newsworthy, though no less impactful, was the trip made by the CCC men of company 1520-C(olored) to an Ohio State -vs- Notre Dame track meet in the spring of 1935, one year before OSU’s speedy Owens would prove a national hero at the 1936 summer Olympics in Berlin.⁷⁴ Contrary to claims that the CCC “segregated enrollees from society at large . . . far from their home communities or any established community,” the CCC actually relied heavily on intercommunity engagement in its attempts to meld disparate populations into one distinct polity.⁷⁵

CORPSMEN AND COMMUNITY

Through publications such as Company 914’s *Tahoe Tales*, distributed around Camp Forbes, California, Company 945’s *Prairie Schooner* of Goldendale, Washington, and Company 4764’s *Park Gopher* of Silverton Creek Falls, Colorado, we are afforded relatively unfiltered first-person access into the collective consciousness of a given company at specific points of time. Despite the scene set by oral testimonies such as those collected by Shary Page Berg in her study of CCC activity in

Massachusetts, these newsletters make clear that the standard operating procedure of camps across the country was engineered to *integrate*, not isolate, corpsmen.⁷⁶ Successful integration amongst not only fellow enrollees, but also nearby populations, was of paramount concern. It is, perhaps, unavoidable that certain young enrollees would come down with an acute case of homesickness, especially in the first few days after trading in street clothes for the standard forest green Corps uniform. Harold Fraine, for example, a former supervisor at Myles Standish State Forest, some forty-five miles outside of Boston, has recalled “the feeling of complete isolation that came to (him) the first night (he) slept in a CCC camp.”⁷⁷ But there exists significant evidence to suggest that the camps and campers were not always subject to total isolation. In fact, the experience of the average corpsman was far from monastic. In 1934, after a long, hot day spent directing traffic flow in support of an American Legion parade on the streets of Miami, CCC Company 269 hosted a dance at the Biltmore Club in Coral Gables. For twenty-five cents, corpsmen were able to apply what they had learned in their camp-organized ‘How to Talk to Girls’ lessons and spend the night dancing with the young women of Dade County.⁷⁸ Further up the coast, as reported by Company 182 based in West Cornwall, Connecticut in its *Camp Cross Clarion*, a dance held in September 1935 at Rialto Hall with the ‘Belles of Torrington High’ was so popular that “there is every reason to believe another will be forthcoming in the near future.”⁷⁹ Such social engagements sometimes brought on serious romantic consequence. The first page of a 1937 issue of Camp Warrenton, Oregon’s *West Winds*, detailed the marriage of one Ethel Cobben to Company 2111 corpsman Laurence Hanlon in an in-camp ceremony punctuated by the theatrical (and impeccably timed) felling of nearby tree.⁸⁰

The Corps’ interaction with local communities was not always recreational in nature and beyond the public service role demanded by assignment to local parade grounds, out of state corpsmen proved themselves capable of heroism on several occasions. Thanks, at least in part to their familiarity with the surrounding natural environment, corpsmen across the country managed to aid their adopted communities in times of peril. The Corps’ quick response to the traffic jams related to a volcanic eruption on the island of Hawaii in September 1934 for example, prompted a local newspaper to publish a written apology for its prior

criticism of the Corps' presence on the island and its recent aggressive manipulation of traditional traffic patterns.⁸¹ During a deadly blizzard which covered parts of Arizona, Utah, Nevada, and California in several feet of snow between Christmas and New Years' Day, 1937, corpsmen rode to town in trucks and tractors in order to dig out homes, cars, men, women, and children and return them to safety.⁸² When the infamous 'Great Labor Day Hurricane of 1935' killed more than 400 people in the Florida Keys, four of the several hundred corpsmen who helped rescue survivors distinguished themselves to the extent that they were awarded scholarships to attend the University of Miami.⁸³ According to the Jacksonville *Florida Times-Union*, these young men (three Floridians and one Tennessean) saw their camp duties rearranged so that they could attend classes while remaining on active duty.⁸⁴ That this was covered in a paper based more than 350 miles away demonstrates the reach of these feats and their ability to unify the populations of states across the union. This fact was not lost on Roosevelt's Labor Secretary Frances Perkins, who once remarked that CCC men were "looked upon in each community from which they came as representative of that community. As long as they are in the service their welfare will be the subject of community interest and discussion."⁸⁵

For better or worse, the Corps remained in the public eye from town to town. Less than one full year into the Corps' existence, Lake City, Florida declared itself 'off limits' to CCC corpsmen as a consequence of unspecified "rowdy behavior," while the men of Camp SP-3 near Stephenville, Texas formed a football team called the "Blue Eagles" and promptly won the 1934 district football championship.⁸⁶ In March 1935, the captain of CCC Company 180 based at Camp Robinson in East Hartland, Connecticut reminded his corpsmen in their *Tunxis Tattler* newsletter that spring was "the time of year when each of us should be giving particular attention to the improvement of the appearance of the camp. As the weather continues to get warmer, visitors will be stopping in. . . ."⁸⁷ Likewise, the official nationally distributed newspaper of the CCC, *Happy Days*, ran a story five years later on May 11th, 1940 describing the positive reactions of the "thousands of visitors (that had) attended (CCC) 'open-houses' across the country."⁸⁸ In various other issues, *Happy Days* also promoted its plans for "a nation-wide CCC billiard tournament," labeled Canada's National Forest Programme as

“the healthy young cousin of our CCC,” and looked forward to qualified enrollees’ acquisition of permanent forestry jobs from coast to coast.⁸⁹ Without fail, the periodical’s classified section included nationwide opportunities and kept current enrollees abreast of both the professional and athletic successes of Corps alumni irrespective of the subject’s hometown or service area.⁹⁰

When, in 1937, Fechner took to writing a short history of the Corps, he conceded that though plentiful, “the broad social implications of the Civilian Conservation Corps are extremely difficult to measure.”⁹¹ In struggling to locate “the place of the Corps in American life,” the Director appears to have overlooked the fact that the impact of the CCC actually extended beyond its enrollees.⁹² The behavior of individual corpsmen and the structures they erected spoke not only to the men involved with the Corps directly, but to the region, indeed the country, or ‘nation,’ at large. Though the CCC was divided into three loosely ‘regional zones’ of administration and camps were typically set back beyond the tree line, enrollees were hardly sheltered from the realities of life outside the Corps. Corpsmen were subjected to constant promotion of a sense of cross-country awareness through a variety of means and in this way both “learned about” and “helped build America.”⁹³ In turn, the agency served its purpose and served as a conduit for the experience-informed growth of an American identity.

CONCLUSION

In a radio address transmitted from the Two Medicine Chalet in Glacier National Park on August 5th, 1934 President Roosevelt explained the role of federal park land across the greater United States:

I have been back on the soil of the continental United States for three days after most interesting visits to our fellow Americans in Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, the Canal Zone and the Territory of Hawaii. I return with the conviction that their problems are essentially similar to those of us who live on the mainland and, furthermore, that they are enthusiastically doing their part to improve their conditions of life and thereby the conditions of life of all Americans. . . . There is nothing so American as our national parks. The scenery and wildlife are native.

The fundamental idea behind the parks is native. It is, in brief, that the country belongs to the people, that it is in the process of making for the enrichment of the lives of all of us. The parks stand as the outward symbol of this great human principle.⁹⁴

Before concluding, the president remarked on his consultation earlier that day of some of the 75,000 ‘CCC boys’ at work in national parks around the country. In identifying the still developing park spaces as distinctly American, Roosevelt draws a clear parallel between the wilderness spaces being cultivated by the Corps and the New Deal’s cultivation of a new American identity. His words reaffirm that the CCC was as much a cultural initiative as it was social or environmental. Unlike speeches and policy proposals, though, the CCC left behind a substantial, widely accessible material record.

The transformation of the American landscape was only part of what made the CCC such a powerful agent of cultural homogenization. Above all else, it was the CCC’s harnessing of human energy which proved its greatest asset. Corps architecture, as both rhetorical abstraction and functional necessity, delivered a message that was replicated in the post offices, schools, bridges, and hospitals built by the WPA and PWA in cities and towns across the country. As practical embodiments of an abstract ideal, the structures erected by the CCC were part of a much larger effort on the part of liberal reformers to promote trans-cultural interaction between young Americans. While working-age first, second, or third generation Italian or Polish or Filipino men were getting paid to shed their hyphenated identity through working in CCC camps, in major cities such as New York, Robert Moses and Fiorello La Guardia joined forces to secure federal funding for urban projects which would afford “immigrant and working-class children (the opportunity) to play in parks and playgrounds rather than on streets and backyards.”⁹⁵ Under the New Deal, new swimming and wading pools were opened across New York City on a weekly basis, and while integration-related tensions sometimes flared, “old world traditions” were forced into direct contact with “modern American customs.”⁹⁶

Problematic as his overall thesis may have been for a variety of different reasons, for Turner, American democracy was the product of popular engagement with the frontier and identity was born, not necessarily

of class status or social protocol, but of lived experience.⁹⁷ Six months at a time, the CCC endeavored to offer a quintessentially American experience to a range of young men with the intention of reinforcing a curated image of frontier life and American history. The attempt to create a monolithic American identity, while undeniably Eurocentric, drew influence from a range of sources. By privileging an Americanized understanding of the Spanish (colonial) style as much as the Scandinavian cabin, CCC architecture was, in other words, uniform in its variety. While other world powers were busy attempting to engineer and codify a state architectural style, CCC designers resolved to harness a diversity of regional traditions and in doing so furnished a display of strength New Dealers hoped would underpin the exceptional nature of a the twentieth-century American. By building in the style of past generations and drawing on a range of regional influences, the Corps gave solid expression to state authored cultural memory and a renewed sense of national identity. Motivated by a mythologized understanding of the past, a unified embrace of the present, and an optimistic look toward the future, corpsmen moved to narrate the American experience through the construction of parks and park buildings across the United States.

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NOTES

1. Albert H. Good, *Park and Recreation Structures I–III* (Washington D.C.: USDoI, 1938), 2.
2. Robert Fechner, “The Civilian Conservation Corps Program,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 194, (1937):129–40, Here, 130.
3. Ibid, 131.
4. In spite of FDR’s official recommendation to make the CCC a permanent federal agency, congress voted to defund the program following the United States’ entrance into the Second World War.
5. Fechner, 131, 129; See also Ray Hoyt, *Your CCC: A Handbook for Enrollees* (Washington D.C.: Happy Days, 1939), 14, 17.

6. These populations never counted against the enrollment cap, even after annual enrollment was limited to 300,000 in 1937. See Fechner, 12 9, 136.
7. These are conservative figures which may more accurately reflect the Corps at its midway point in early 1937 than the final 1942 tallies. See Fechner, 129.
8. Ira Katznelson, *Fear Itself: The New Deal and the Origins of Our Time* (New York: Norton, 2013), 34.
9. See the article written by Iowa farmer-turned Secretary of Agriculture Henry Wallace, "The Search for an American Way," *Scribner's Magazine* 50, July 1936. Quoted in Kiran Klaus Patel, *The New Deal: A Global History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016) 254–55.
10. See Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 44–80. Although I have attempted to use the term in an unambiguous manner, it should be noted that the concept of 'Americanization' was later co-opted by, among others, white supremacists claiming solidarity with the Volksdeutsche element of the Nazi presence within the United States.
11. Neil Maher, *Nature's New Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
12. Eric Gorham, "The Ambiguous Practices of the Civilian Conservation Corps, *Social History* 17 (1992): 229–249, here 230.
13. *Ibid.*, 231.
14. It is worth noting that the CCC, like many Progressive Era programs, withstood the creation of the Congress of Industrial Organizations and labor revolutions of 1935.
15. Melissa Bass, The Success and Contradictions of New Deal Democratic Populism: The Case of the Civilian Conservation Corps, *The Good Society* 21 (2012): 250–260, p. 251. Bass argues that while a democratic institution would "engage participants as citizens," a populist alternative would merely "build their capacity to act as citizens" in American democracy. See *Ibid.*, 250. In another interesting study, Bass has also read the outlook and organization of the Corps against more recent federally sanctioned service organizations such as Johnson's VISTA program and Clinton's AmeriCorps. See Melissa Bass, *The Politics and Civics of National Service: Lessons from the Civilian Conservation Corps, VISTA, and AmeriCorps* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2013).
16. John Salmond, "The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Negro," *Journal of American History* 52, (1965): 75–88; Donald Parman, "The Indian and the Civilian Conservation Corps," *Pacific Historical Review* 40, (1971): 39–56. See also Calvin Gower, "The Struggle for Black Leadership Positions in the Civilian Conservation Corps," *Journal of Negro History* 61, (1976): 123–35; Olen Cole, Jr., *The African-American Experience in the Civilian Conservation Corps* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1999).
17. Holly Allen, *Forgotten Men and Fallen Women: The Cultural Politics of the New Deal* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), 77–80.
18. Harold T. Pinkett, "Records in National Archives Related to Social Purposes of Civilian Conservation Corps," *Social Service Review* 22, (1948): 46–53, here, 53.
19. Phoebe Cutler, *The Public Landscape of the New Deal* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).
20. The more expansive 1938 edition was a follow-up to the original 1935 publication.

21. Cutler, p. 91; Arno B. Cammerer, "Foreword," in Good, *Park and Recreation Structures*, VII. Cammerer refers to the Corps' by its original name: Emergency Conservation Work program.
22. Good, I.
23. Ibid.
24. Good, 6.
25. For an excellent analysis of the internal squabbles between the OSA and PWA, as well as the official desire to codify a distinctly American style of architecture, see Elizabeth Grossman, "Paul Cret and the Federal Reserve Building, *Revue française d'études américaines* 102, (2004): 6–19, here 15.
26. Cutler, 79.
27. Good, 18.
28. Jonathan Harris, *Federal Art & National Culture: The Politics of Identity in New Deal America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 10. See also Grossman, 15.
29. Douglas Brinkley, *Rightful Heritage: The Renewal of America* (New York: Harper Collins, 2016), 178; Cutler, 79.
30. Cutler, 80.
31. Good, 20.
32. Good, 22. Brinkley describes certain structures as having "regional swagger," 218.
33. Even superficial analysis of these performance spaces would have done much to advance Holly Allen's arguments in the section entitled "CCC Storytelling" in her recent *The Cultural Politics of the New Deal*.
34. Much of the information presented in this description was recorded in HABS WA-192, authored by James A. MacDonald in 1991.
35. C.f. HABS WA-193-A, which was thematically subordinated to the dominant Bavarian motif of the tourist village of Leavenworth, Washington.
36. Much of the information presented in this description was recorded in David Driaspas, "O'Leno State Park," Survey (photographs, measured drawings, written historical and descriptive data), Historical American Buildings Survey, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 2014. From Photographs and Prints Division, Library of Congress (HALS FL-13).
37. Ibid., 6.
38. Rebecca M. Rodgers, "Parsons Nursery, Cheat District Ranger Office," Survey (photographs, measured drawings, written historical and descriptive data), Historical American Buildings Survey, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1989. From Photographs and Prints Division, Library of Congress (HABS WV-237).
39. Alison Hoagland, "Chisos Basin Store," Survey (photographs, measured drawings, written historical and descriptive data), Historical American Buildings Survey, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1993. From Photographs and Prints Division, Library of Congress (HABS TX-3399).
40. "Trouble in the Tropics," *Work: A Journal of Progress*, (January 1937): 15–18.
41. See Brinkley, 192.
42. For a very recent, long overdue study of the many ways state parks directly spurred on economic recovery through tourism, for example, see David J. Nelson, *How the New Deal Built Florida Tourism: The Civilian Conservation Corps and State Parks* (Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 2020).

43. According to the report, "New York licenses predominate for those states along the Atlantic Seaboard." "Burlington Camp SP-2 Narrative Report for June and July 1935," July 31, 1935. See Sara Leach, "Redwood National and State Parks Roads," Survey (photographs, measured drawings, written historical and descriptive data), Historic American Engineering Record, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 2001, Photographs and Prints Division, Library of Congress (HAER CA-269), 72.
44. See Dawn Duensing, "Hawaii Volcanoes National Park Roads," Survey (photographs, measured drawings, written historical and descriptive data), Historic American Engineering Record, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1999, Photographs and Prints Division, Library of Congress (HAER HI-47), 51.
45. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 4.
46. Good, 2.
47. *Ibid.*
48. The other was Labor Secretary Frances Perkins, the first woman to hold a federal cabinet position.
49. Harold Ickes, "Parks and Peace," in *1940 Yearbook: Park and Recreation Progress*, (Washington D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1940), III.
50. See Larry Dilsaver (ed.), *America's National Park System: The Critical Documents* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1994), p.166–8.
51. Such monuments, not erected in town squares and municipal parks, but built directly across from similar monuments to the Northern dead on specific battle sites, serve an altogether different purpose than the monuments erected across the hyperpolarized south in the 1920s.
52. Anderson, 7.
53. Anderson, 9.
54. See Amanda J. Holmes, "Gettysburg National Military Park Tour Roads," Survey (photographs, measured drawings, written historical and descriptive data), Historic American Engineering Record, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1998, Photographs and Prints Division, Library of Congress (HAER PA-485).
55. *Ibid.*
56. Todd Croteau, et al., "Vicksburg National Military Park Roads and Bridges," Survey (photographs, measured drawings, written historical and descriptive data), Historic American Engineering Record, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1997, Photographs and Prints Division, Library of Congress (HAER MS-14), 38.
57. *Ibid.*, 38–40.
58. Michael Bennett, "Yorktown Battlefield Tour Roads," Survey (photographs, measured drawings, written historical and descriptive data), Historic American Engineering Record, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1997, Photographs and Prints Division, Library of Congress (HAER VA-117), 6–7.
59. Anderson, p. 7. On the relationship between memory, identity, mortality, and place, see Jeff Malpas, *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 176–193.
60. HABS AK-23.
61. CCC 'Benefit Letters,' CCC Division of Public Relations, CCC Records in National Archives, Washington D.C., quoted in Pinkett (1948).

62. Harry Boyte and Nancy Kari, *Building America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 29; Donald Dale Jackson, "To the CCC: Thanks for the Memories and Monuments," *Smithsonian Magazine* 25, (1994), 9. Quoted in Bass, p. 253.
63. Variations of this phrase were popularized by Theodore Roosevelt in the early twentieth century.
64. See Pinkett, 49.
65. Salmond, 86.
66. William Kelly to C. Taylor, February 23, 1939, Records of the CCC, Correspondence of the Director, quoted in Salmond, 86.
67. Robert Audretsch, "Phantom Ranch: Crucible of the Civilian Conservation Corps," *The Journal of Arizona History* 52, (2011): 31–52, here 34, 44.
68. Salmond, 81; Fechner quoted in Holly Allen, 75.
69. Salmond, 81
70. Ibid.
71. Thomas Patton, "'A Forest Camp Disgrace': The Rebellion of Civilian Conservation Corps Workers at Preston, New York, July 7, 1933," *New York History* 82, (2001): 231–258, here, 250.
72. According to Calvin Gower, Brown caused a stir in the camp and entire Democratic Party by misrepresenting himself as the "Advisor on Negro Affairs." Regardless of whether his ambition was the product of self-interest or charity, he came to be considered a liability in advance of the 1936 presidential campaign. See Gower, 133.
73. *The Daily News*, (St. Thomas), February 21, 1941. Quoted in Gower, 133.
74. William W. Giffin, "Acting to Shape Their Own Lives: African Americans in Civilian Conservation Corps Junior Company 1520-C, Southern Ohio, 1933–1935," *Ohio Valley History* 13, (2013): 22–40, here, 26.
75. Bass, 251.
76. Shary Page Berg, "Civilian Conservation Corps Initiative: Cultural Resources in Massachusetts Forests and Parks," *The Journal of Preservation Technology* 31, (2000): 47–53.
77. Typescript in the CCC Archives DEM Region 5 Headquarters, Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Quoted in Berg, 48. Eventually, Fraine came to appreciate the part he played in the federally sponsored "enlarge(ment) of (the) civilizing process."
78. Jerrell Shofner, "Roosevelt's Tree Army: The Civilian Conservation Corps in Florida," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 65, (1987): 433–456, here. 454; Gorham, 242.
79. *Camp Cross Clarion*, September 1935, 1.
80. *West Winds*, 1937, 1.
81. Wingate, "Super Intendment's Monthly Report," September 1934, HAER HI-47, 52.
82. For an excellent local history of this event, see Robert Audretsch, "Unequaled in the Memory of the Oldest Inhabitant: Civilian Conservation Corps Rescue Work During the Blizzards of 1936–37," *The Journal of Arizona History* 54, (2013): 375–396.
83. Shofner, 443.
84. *Jacksonville Florida Times-Union*, September 25, 1935. Quoted in *ibid*.
85. Quoted in Allen, 75.

86. Shofner, 454; Kenneth Hendrickson, "Replenishing the Soil and the Soul of Texas: The Civilian Conservation Corps in the Lone Star State as an Example of State-Federal Work Relief During the Great Depression," *The Historian* 65, (2003): 801–816, here, 805.
87. *Tunxis Tattler*, March 27, 1935, 2
88. *Happy Days*, May 11, 1940, 11. Uncoincidentally, 'Happy Days' was also the name of FDR's unofficial campaign theme song.
89. *Happy Days*, July 13, 1935; *Happy Days*, May 11, 1940; *Happy Days*, January 26, 1935.
90. "CCC Pitcher signs with Youngstown," *Happy Days*, May 11, 1940, 15.
91. Fechner. 136.
92. Ibid.
93. Allen. 79.
94. FDR Master Speech File, Reel 2, Series 2, Folder 2, FDR Library, Hyde Park.
95. Marta Gutman, "Race, Place, and Play: Robert Moses and the WPA Swimming Pools in New York City," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 67, (2008): 532–561, here, 535.
96. Dorothy Reed, affiliate of the Boy's Club on East 111th St., quoted in Gutman, 539.
97. For a broad perspective on the complicated legacy of Turnerian thought, see the summer 1993 issue of the *Journal of the Early Republic*. The issue includes nine articles as part of a centennial symposium on the significance of Turner in the twentieth century and critiques the nineteenth-century historian's ideas from a variety of different angles. See especially Margaret Washington, "African American History and the Frontier Thesis," *Journal of the Early Republic* 13, (1993): 230–241.