

[Note: This is a short history of the Civilian Conservation Corps Company 3840, stationed at Camp SCS-19-A, St. David, Ariz., and Camp SCS-26-A, Patagonia, Ariz.; more information about the CCC, the St. David camp, and the roster of CCC personnel stationed at this camp are available from the author, Sharon E. Hunt, at sharon@wordhunting.com]

Civilian Conservation Corps Company 3840

Camp SCS-19-A St. David, Arizona

Camp SCS-26-A Patagonia, Arizona

History of the CCC

On March 31, 1933, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed the Emergency Conservation Work Act authorizing the creation of what became the Civilian Conservation Corps, or CCC, and on April 7th, the first enrollees were called up for service. The CCC was one of the federal government's New Deal programs, designed to combat the harsh conditions of the Great Depression in this country. Nearly 3.5 million men served in more than 4,500 camps across the country during the nine years of the program's existence from 1933-1942. Among their many accomplishments, they planted 3 billion trees; restored nearly 4,000 historic structures; built 125,000 miles of roads; spent 4.2 million man-days fighting forest fires; arrested soil erosion on more than 20 million acres of farmland; and built or improved 800 national and state parks (1).

In Arizona, the CCC worked on forestry projects; water and soil erosion projects; park development; and insect and disease control. They built roads; strung telephone lines; installed range fences; and planted trees (2). Over 41,000 men from Arizona were enrolled, and more than 52,000 served here, with an average of 31 camps operating a year. The total financial obligation within the state was more than 58 million dollars (3).

History of St. David CCC Camp

The St. David camp was a Soil Conservation Service camp (SCS); the SCS was one of the main federal government agencies involved in CCC projects during the 1930s and early 1940s. The main purpose of SCS projects was soil erosion control. Five hundred CCC camps were under the control of the SCS during the length of the program and their projects arrested soil erosion on more than twenty million acres (4).

The St. David SCS Camp SCS-19-A (the “A” stands for “Arizona”) was occupied by Company 3840. It was in place from 1935 to 1939; the company then left for Camp SCS-26-A located in Patagonia, AZ, where they worked from 1939-1940. However, there continued to be a “side camp” in St. David in 1940, with a small work group from the Patagonia camp stationed there.

Campsite

The campsite included a headquarters building, supply room, barracks, mess hall, recreational hall, infirmary, recreational field, tennis court, basketball court, volleyball court, horseshoe pit, and a concrete wash rack for trucks. It was located at the present-day site of the St. David RV Resort on Hwy. 80 in St. David.

Enrollees

Enrollees of the camp were predominantly from Oklahoma, Texas, and Arizona. The Texas enrollees were from Fort Worth and the surrounding area in northeastern Texas, from Corpus Christi and the surrounding area in southern Texas; and from San Antonio and the surrounding area in southern Texas. The Oklahoma enrollees were from Oklahoma City and the surrounding area. The Arizona enrollees were from southeastern Arizona, including St. David and the neighboring town of Benson.

Work Projects

The work of the enrollees was supervised by individuals working for the Soil Conservation Service (SCS). These supervisors and foremen were called Technical Services personnel. Projects consisted of construction of stock tanks, diversion ditches, and roads. According to the camp newspaper, as of February 1936, the camp enrollees and Technical Services personnel had completed two large water storage tanks; 3798 check dams; 20 miles of diversion ditches, spreader dykes and terraces; constructed 15 miles of minor roads; seeded approximately 150 acres; sodded approximately 40 acres; and treated some 2000 acres of land.

- *Side Camps*

- In 1936, the camp had two side camps at a distance of 40 miles from the main camp, and 25 men were assigned to each camp under the direction of a camp foreman.
- According to the November 1939 camp newspaper, there was a side camp at the Saxon Ranch, working on diversion dikes. The men expected to work there a few more months and then move to a new location.
- In November 1939 and May 1940, there was also a side camp at St. David, about 62 miles from the main camp, now located in Patagonia. In November 1939, the camp newspaper reported that the enrollees were working on the Eisman ranch, building diversion dikes under the supervision of foremen Mr. Fanning and Mr. Mather. The May 1940 newspaper reported that the dike west of St. David was now 1500 feet long, with less than 100 feet to go, and contained an eight-foot fill.

- *Swimming Pool*

In the spring of 1936, the enrollees built a pool at their campsite in St. David under the supervision of Mr. Richard Myrick, Technical Foreman, and filled it with water from the artesian well. The pool was open to individuals from the surrounding areas.

- *Job Training*
Job training for the enrollees came through their work projects and through the camp's educational program. The CCC sought to provide these enrollees with job skills to enable them to obtain and function well in jobs when they left the CCC.

Camp Activities

The running of the camp was the responsibility of personnel from the U.S. Army. They housed, fed, and supervised the enrollees once their work day was completed; they also provided medical care and educational classes to the enrollees.

- *Educational Program*
Classes included journalism (members of this class published the camp newspapers); Concrete Construction; Plan Reading; Plane Surveying; Tool Sharpening; Blacksmithing; and Auto Mechanics. There were also classes in First Aid and in Life Saving.
- *Religious Services*
An average of 40 men attended churches every Sunday in Benson.
- *Recreational Program*
The recreational hall contained two pool tables, ping pong table, several card tables, piano and overstuffed furniture, as well as a complete library with books and magazines in adjoining reading room. The company has a musical singing quartet with a piano accompanist.
- *Field Trips*
The enrollees went on field trips, such as a Feb. 1936 trip to the Dragoon Mountains. They also attended dances in nearby towns, such as one in Feb. 1936 at Tombstone.
- *Sports Program*
For sports, there was swimming in the camp pool, built by enrollees, as well as baseball, basketball, and softball teams. The softball team was awarded a trip to participate in the Western States Softball Tournament at Phoenix. The camp's basketball team participated in inter-camp competition and in the Tucson District Basketball Tournament held in Tucson, Feb. 28-29, 1936. The team also played the local St. David High School team. In addition to a recreational field, there were a tennis court, baseball field, volleyball court, and horseshoe pit.

Timeline

August 23, 1935	Camp established
August 23/24, 1935	Temporary cadre of 20 men from Bonham, TX, arrived; met by Superintendent A.A. James and Engineer William Anderson; Captain William Cowherd arrived later that day to take temporary command of the company. Cadre set to work preparing camp—improved company area; put office, supply room, barracks, and mess hall into shape
August 27, 1935	150 Texas and Oklahoma Juniors arrived; 12 Local Experienced Men were enrolled at Benson and moved to camp
September 1935	Work began on SCS projects
November 4, 1935	Educational Director assigned to camp. School room and recreational hall were improved and classes in vocational and elementary subjects introduced; several enrollees attending St. David High School
February 13, 1936	First issue of camp SCS-19-A newspaper “Snappy Daze” published
April 1936	By this date, the camp swimming pool has been completed and was being filled with water from the artesian well. The pool is open to the nearby communities.
October 1, 1939	Company 3840 stationed at Patagonia at Camp SCS-26-A, with a side camp at Saxon and another at St. David
May 1940	St. David side camp still operating; building dike west of St. David

Notes

- (1) *NACCCA Journal* 26 (11):12.
- (2) *NACCCA Journal* 26 (12):4.
- (3) Cohen, Stan. *The Tree Army: A Pictorial History of the Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942*. Missoula, MT: Pictorial Histories Publishing Co. 1980, p. 149
- (4) <http://www.cccalumni.org/history1.html>

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