

## THE CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS (CCC)

### Madera Canyon, Arizona

*Sharon E. Hunt*



*History of the CCC:* The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was one of U.S. president Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal programs, designed to provide young, unmarried men between the ages of 17 and 28 with jobs while they worked on projects to conserve the country's natural resources. Nearly 3.5 million men served in the CCC in 4,500 camps located throughout the United States during 1933–1942. Among their many accomplishments, they arrested soil erosion on more than 20 million acres of farmland; planted 3 billion trees; spent 4.2 million man-days fighting forest fires; built 125,000 miles of roads; and built or improved 800 national and state parks [Cohen, *Tree Army*]. In Arizona, the CCC worked on forestry projects; water and soil erosion projects; park development; and insect and disease control.

*History of the Madera Canyon Camp:* Madera Canyon was home to CCC Camp F-30-A from 1933 to 1938. The camp, just below the present-day White House picnic area on the west side of the Santa Rita Mountains, was inhabited by CCC companies 1838, 1826-V, and 2848. Each company was composed of up to 200 enrollees, who signed up for 6-month periods of service. The enrollees at Madera Canyon came from Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Oklahoma, or Texas. The "V" in Co. 1826's designation meant that this was a company composed of WWI veterans, who were older than other enrollees and often married. After the camp closed, the U.S. Army continued to use the camp facilities as a recreation area.

*Work Projects:* The work of the CCC enrollees at Madera Canyon was supervised by Technical Services personnel under the leadership of project superintendent W.H. Hughes. These personnel included Forest Service employees and local experienced men with specialized skills (LEMs). The enrollees received \$30/month for their considerable efforts. The camp work projects fell into two main areas: conservation of the watershed and forest, and development of recreational facilities.

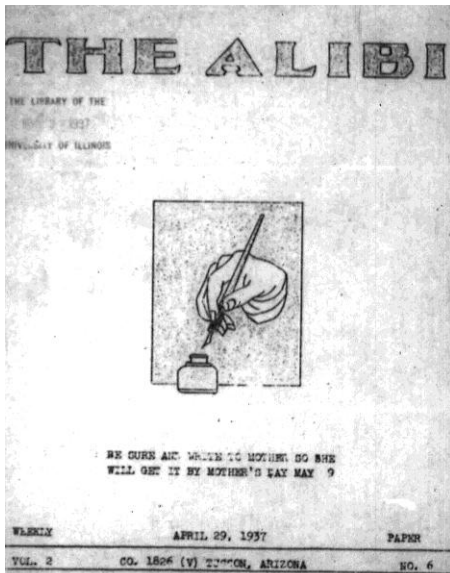
The forestry projects were aimed at protecting the forest and at supporting cattle grazing. The men worked on fire-control and revegetation projects, fought forest fires, developed four springs, hung telephone lines, and installed erosion-control devices, including dams. They built water tanks, reservoirs, fences, pipelines, and cattle guards for range stock. In 1936, the ten men at the Madera-Baldy Trail side camp, eight miles from the main camp, constructed a trail to the lookout station on the summit of Mt. Baldy and maintained the Forest Service telephone and trail to this station. The Box Canyon Road, crossing over the northern end of the Santa Rita Mountains, linking White House Canyon Road with Arizona Highway 83, was completed in May 1935.

In 1937 and 1938, enrollees at a side camp at the Santa Rita Experimental Range built and improved roads, constructed fences, erected stock tanks, installed erosion-control features, developed plots for wildlife protection, surveyed for fence lines, revegetated the area, and eradicated weed species. At Florida Station, they constructed retaining walls, stream-control dams, the entrance gate, icehouse, and roads.

The men developed recreational areas in Madera Canyon, building stone fireplaces and tables for picnic areas, developing the Madera Canyon Upper and Lower Campgrounds, blazing trails, building roads and bridges, and installing pipelines.

*Camp Life:* The CCC camp was run by U.S. Army personnel, who fed, clothed, transported, educated, and provided medical care to the enrollees. The camps had a camp commander, second in command, camp physician, and educational adviser. The Madera Canyon camp buildings included five barracks, living quarters for Technical Services personnel, supply room, kitchen and mess hall, living quarters for U.S. Army personnel, headquarters, canteen, rec hall with reading room and barber shop,

lighting plant, bath house, infirmary, and pump house. The camp was landscaped with flower gardens and rock retaining walls. The married WWI veterans were allowed to bring their families, who lived in house trailers near the present-day site of the visitor information center.



*The Alibi* camp newspaper

The enrollees had an active camp life, with the rec hall the center of recreational activities. They held dances, open to outsiders; enjoyed film nights; read books and newspapers; celebrated holidays with special meals and entertainment programs; and played pool and checkers. Sports were an important part of camp life, including volleyball, softball, croquet, horseshoes, and track and field. They took field trips to nearby towns for rodeos, dances, sightseeing, and athletic contests.

The educational program offered academic and vocational courses; job help; and the camp newspaper. The newspapers were a way to build camp morale and literacy skills; they are also a chance for the enrollees to get in some good-natured ribbing towards each other. “Tommie Gavagen says he is going to take his bed with him next time he goes to Phoenix. When he came home the other day, the boys in barracks four had removed the springs that held the mattress, and put strings instead.”

*Value of the CCC:* The cost of the CCC program to the United States was approximately \$3 billion. The value of the program to the country and to the enrollees is incalculable, as noted in the camp newspaper: “This plan picked up boys off the streets and the roads and put them to work . . . In the face of these facts and the fact that the work program has meant so much, and will mean more in the future toward conserving and developing our national resources, we anticipate recognizing the cost of maintaining the CCC is very small in comparison and proportion to its worth to the country as a whole.” The camp newspaper summed up the enduring contribution the Madera Canyon CCC men made to this area: “This work, once done, will live on after we have left the canyon, and will still be a source of pleasure to tired seekers for relaxation, rest and recreation . . . we will realize more fully in the future that the work we did in the shadow of the mountains was not done in vain.”

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