

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in Patagonia, AZ, 1933-1941

Introduction

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), 1933-1942, was one of the U.S. government's New Deal programs, designed to combat the harsh conditions of the Great Depression. The program put young, unmarried men to work on projects to conserve the nation's natural resources. Nearly 3.5 million men were involved, and their projects to combat soil erosion, develop recreational areas, and improve forests made a significant impact on the country.

The men, known as enrollees or "CCC boys," signed up for 6-month periods and served in companies of approximately 200 men. They lived in camps run by the U.S. Army, with a camp commander, second in command, educational advisor, and physician. Camps had barracks, an infirmary, a rec hall, a camp store, a garage, sports fields, and a kitchen and mess hall. There were more than 4,500 camps all across the nation.

Personnel from state and federal government agencies supervised the weekday work projects. During the evenings, the enrollees gathered in the rec hall to listen to the radio, play games, read books and magazines in the library, write letters home, and take educational classes. On weekends, they played sports, went to dances, attended church, and visited nearby towns and girlfriends.

Patagonia CCC Camp

Several CCC companies lived at the Patagonia campsite, located west of town off SR82. They worked on projects important to the area: controlling water and supporting cattle ranching and recreation. The enrollees constructed dams and other water-control structures, worked on ranger stations, developed springs, improved recreational areas, erected range fences, and built and repaired roads.

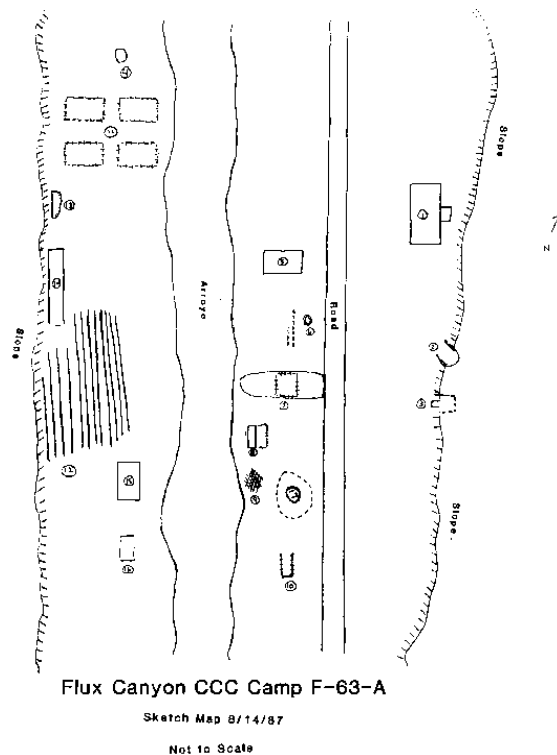


Figure 1. Map of CCC Camp F-63-A site by Catherine Cameron, based on visit to area in 1987 with CCC Camp F-63-A CCC personnel. (Courtesy William B. Gillespie)

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Company 832 from Box Canyon, Camp F-11-A, moved to the Patagonia campsite in October 1933. The campsite became Flux Canyon Camp F-63-A in 1934, and the enrollees worked on projects for the Forest Service. Early in 1934, they overhauled and rebuilt the Nogales Ranger Station and erected fences. During the summer, they worked on the Patagonia Ranger Station.

Company 862 occupied the camp from October 1934 through the following winter. They built roads, erected fences, constructed dams, improved the ranger stations (painting and plastering buildings and landscaping the grounds), and developed springs.

Company 2847 came in July 1935 and stayed until they moved to Camp F-64-A in Nogales in December. The enrollees built and maintained roads and range fences, improved recreational areas, strung telephone lines, developed springs, constructed earth and masonry dams, and gathered seeds. In fall 1935, the enrollees built the Flux Canyon Road for forest firefighters, miners, and tourists. A side camp at Flux Canyon in early 1936 worked on building a fire trail from the airport toward the Flux Canyon Road.

Company 3840 relocated from Camp SCS-19-A, St. David, in October 1939. The camp was then designated SCS-26-A, under the supervision of the Soil Conservation Service. These CCC boys, most of whom hailed from Arizona or Texas, constructed many water-control structures (diversion dikes, check dams, water spreaders) in Patagonia and Flux and Josephine Canyons. They also constructed truck trails, fences, and stock tanks on local cattle ranches. The company moved to Parker, AZ, in October 1941, and the Patagonia campsite was abandoned.



Figure 2. Panoramic view of Patagonia CCC camp, ca. 1939/40. (Courtesy Ernest Bruss)

Town of Patagonia

The boys spent much of their free time in the town of Patagonia. They went to dances, visited girls, and played sports with the local teams. The Patagonia High School helped them publish their camp newspaper, and the Patagonia Grammar School gave them textbooks. According to the May 1940 camp educational report, "There is an excellent community spirit of cooperation and friendliness existing between the camp and the town of Patagonia." The CCC boys were an important part of Patagonia's history, and their work can still be seen in dams and buildings in the Patagonia area.





Figure 3. Coal pit at Patagonia CCC campsite with plaque at end reading "CCC, SCS-26-A, Co. 3840, 1941." The plaque was built by the CCC enrollees, including Eduardo "Buck" Castillo. (S.E. Hunt)



Figure 4. CCC-constructed earthen dam, CCC Canyon, Patagonia. (S.E. Hunt)

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Figure 5. Drain at bottom of earthen dam, downstream side, CCC Canyon, town of Patagonia. (S.E. Hunt)



Figure 6. Coronado National Forest, Arizona. Office building under construction at Patagonia Ranger Station. Work by Flux Canyon ECW Camp F-63-A. Photo by Lee Kirby. Nov. 1934. #297799. (Courtesy William B. Gillespie)

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