



Civil Engineers: Designers and Builders of the Quality of Life

HHC's Spotlight on the Civilian Conservation Corps

Reprint of past article from History & Heritage Committee

For this article, we focus on the Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930's and 1940's. In an effort to put Americans back to work during the Great Depression, the Emergency Conservation Work Act, more commonly known as the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), enrolled nearly 3,000,000 young men between 1933 and 1942. With camps run by the U.S. Army and work projects managed by the Departments of Interior and Agriculture, the program relied on military leaders and civil engineers to plan and direct thousands of projects, and on CCC enrollees, who were paid \$30 a month, to work far away from home and family during one of the harshest depressions ever experienced in this country.

In Minnesota, most of the facilities in and around the State Park system were developed through the CCC. Along with structures in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area, Lac La Croix, Crooked Lake, Kekekabic Lake, Gooseberry Falls State Parks, and Split Rock Lighthouse, many other areas of wilderness lakes, open prairies, and river valleys were developed to preserve and protect them, and yet, make them accessible to the public for the enjoyment of many future generations.



Ladyslipper
Lodge,
Gooseberry
Falls

Elkman,
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Did you know that while the CCC was in service: 46,854 bridges were built; 800 state parks were created; 4,622 fish rearing ponds were created; 6,966 miles of wildlife streams were developed; 3,980 historic structures were restored; 2,094,713 man-days were spent razing undesirable structures from the countryside; 7,622 impounding and large diversion dams were built; 5,000 miles of water supply lines were laid; 126,230 miles of truck trails and minor roads were built; 3,462 beaches were improved; 45 million trees and shrubs were relocated for landscaping; 3 BILLION trees were planted; millions of acres and thousands of lakes were surveyed and mapped for the first time; 1,865 drinking fountains were installed; 27,191 miles of fences were constructed; 204 lodges and museums were established; 200,000 man-days were spent fighting coal fires (many of which had been burning since the earliest recorded American history, saving billions of tons of coal); hundreds of thousands of man-days were spent fighting forest fires; 3,116 lookout towers were constructed in parks and historic sites; 8,065 wells and pump houses were built; and thousands of man-days were spent in flood control.

The next time you stand in the beauty of our nation’s woodlands, be it a state park or national forest, stop and think of the men who created the road that brought you there, who carved the path you stand on, and who planted or preserved the trees around you. The forests they planted and the buildings they built are an important part of our heritage. All of these facts also point to one thing: Infrastructure. Now that’s Civil Engineering: Designing and Building the Quality of Life.