



The Civilian Conservation Corps at Kennesaw Mountain



Flag raising at Camp T.M. Brumby, Marietta, GA

Introduction: Hope renewed

The 1930's were an especially difficult time in the United States. The economic disasters of the Great Depression left many Americans with little more than hope: 25% of the population was unemployed; another 22 million were homeless. The upcoming 1932 presidential election offered change and renewed hope. The newly elected president, former New York governor Franklin Roosevelt, immediately introduced "New Deal" programs designed to reform and improve citizens' confidence in the economy. The Civilian Conservation Corps, known as the "CCC," was one such relief program that provided work, and hope's answer, to young men of unemployed families.

What is the CCC?

The Civilian Conservation Corps employed mainly young men in conservation projects in city, state, and national parks and forests, military installations, and Native American reservations. Cleverly called "Roosevelt's Tree Army," the young men had to be between the ages of 18-25, unmarried, and have fathers receiving relief benefits. The federal government provided food, clothing, shelter, and any tools they would need. Over 4000 CCC camps were set up in the 48 states, Hawaii, Alaska, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. The men worked 40 hours a week and were paid \$30 a month, \$25 of which they had to send home, keeping \$5 for themselves, a substantial sum at the time. Enrollment lasted initially for six months but was later extended to two years.

The Departments of Labor, Agriculture, Interior and the Army established and operated the camps. The Department of Labor was responsible for recruitment and set work standards. The Army oversaw the camps while the Forest Service (under the Department of Agriculture) and the National Park Service

(under the Department of Interior) supervised the work projects, since most of the work was done on their land. The most successful of the New Deal programs, 750,000 men were enrolled by July 1933. Enrollees constructed community pools, developed trails, landscaped parks, helped stabilize historic buildings and ruins, built campgrounds and picnic areas, fought fires, aided in natural disasters and brought utilities to rural areas by raising telephone and light poles. Communities still benefit from their work as many of the CCC workers' projects still exist and are in use today.

Racial Issues in the CCC

African Americans and Native Americans were segregated and placed in camps with white officers and educational advisors. Native Americans worked on their own reservations and not in camps. African American enrollees lived in military-style camps like their white counterparts, but often dealt with racist attitudes from camp officers and hostility from locals who disliked all-Black camps near their homes.

The CCC at Kennesaw Mountain

From 1938 to early 1942, CCC camp NP4 Company 431, also known as Camp T.M. Brumby, was located at Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park, housing approximately 200 men.

The camp consisted of several buildings and the entrance was off of present day Kennesaw Avenue. There were four barracks buildings with each designed to house approximately 50 men. All buildings were temporary and could be dismantled and moved to another location to be quickly rebuilt. Camp Brumby's buildings were brought here from a disbanded CCC camp in Rutledge, Georgia.

Not much of the original camp still exists, only the foundations of the headquarters, bath house, and a portion of the mess hall foundation. A portion of the entrance to the education building is still visible as well.

All CCC camps included barracks, a mess hall, bath house, education hall, infirmary and outbuildings such as tool sheds.

Life at Camp

Camp life was very regulated and similar to that of the military. The day began at precisely 6:00 a.m. Beds had to be made and then the men headed to the bath house. The men walked through a chlorine foot bath in an attempt to prevent athlete's foot. Breakfast was eaten and the men had to be ready with their tools to go to work by 7:00 a.m. Lunch was at noon and work concluded for the day at 4:00 p.m. Dinner was at 5:00 p.m. and then the fun began. The men could take part in recreational activities or educational programs from 6:00 – 9:30 p.m. and lights were out by the 10:00 p.m. bed check.

As regimented as it sounds, the men grew to appreciate it. Many of the men were unaccustomed to receiving three meals a day and several gained a

considerable amount of healthy weight in spite of performing heavy physical labor. Others who were not very well educated took advantage of the opportunities offered and furthered their education and/or learned a trade.

The schedule for cooks was slightly different. They rose at 3:00 in the morning and worked a rotating schedule of two days on and two days off. Cooks were paid about .30 cents more per man per meal. All meals included a meat and vegetables and were served family style. On holidays and weekends the cooks served two meals a day.

The federal government encouraged supporting the local economy so as much food as possible came from Marietta, Kennesaw and Atlanta.

At Work and Play

Much of the work of the CCC campers here at Kennesaw Mountain is still visible today. The men built the bronze and brick entrance signs that still identify the Battlefield. Grass fields and trees were planted by the CCC enrollees and they constructed almost the entire trail system that is still heavily used today. They built the drive to the Cheatham Hill section of the battlefield and widened Old U. S. 41, which was the main route north at the time. When needed, they also fought local fires.

In August 1939, some of the men were trained to work as tour guides for the Battlefield. The men chosen were those who were relatively better educated than most enrollees and they were instructed in local and Civil War history. These "tour guides" were in a sense the site's earliest rangers and it was their work that began to make the site available to the public while educating them on the events that happened here. These lucky men delighted in giving the tours. They wore ties and, until a visitor came in, worked in what was then the Visitor Center, an old farmhouse. They offered tours of the museum and sometimes

rode with visitors to Cheatham Hill to give a tour there. Occasionally the visitors would allow the CCC guides to drive their cars. The men were lucky to have enough visitors to give two or more tours a day, a huge contrast to the millions of yearly visitors the Battlefield receives today. However just like rangers today, they, too, regarded the earthworks at Cheatham Hill as sacred areas and warned visitors to stay off of them.

All work and no play could definitely make for unhappy young men. During their down time, the men could play pool in the recreation hall (there were two pool tables there), play ping pong or work out using the punching bag. Outside they could play volleyball, baseball or basketball. The camp had a basketball team that frequently played other CCC camp teams or local high schools. The Strand Theater, located in the Marietta square, was within walking distance of the camp. Movies were an affordable option, costing only .15 cents. Many churches were nearby and within walking distance as well if the men wanted to attend services.

In Their Own Words

Walter Edward Rutledge was born January 8, 1921 in Atlanta. He joined the CCC at age 16 in 1937 and spent six months at his first camp at Newberry, South Carolina and then, after not finding employment, reenrolled for another six months and was sent to a camp in Clemson, South Carolina. His last camp was here at Kennesaw Mountain, where he spent one year before entering the army in 1941.

On education...

"I attended my first college classes while in the CCC at Clemson; while I was in Marietta I enrolled in a defense course at Georgia Tech. We were bussed in at night to Georgia Tech and took a course in welding."

On being a park guide...

"The park guide was the elite job. If I hadn't had the park guide job, I would have left and found a job in the private industry, because jobs were beginning to pick up. While I was in the CCC I earned my money, you didn't find many goof-offs. When I went in the army I found it rather easy."

Carless "PeeWee" Collins was born in North Carolina on December 13, 1917. He was in the CCC from 1934 to 1941 and at Camp Brumby from 1938 to 1940. Mr. Collins served as a camp cook and, after his military service, opened and ran the City Cafe restaurant in Marietta for 31 years.

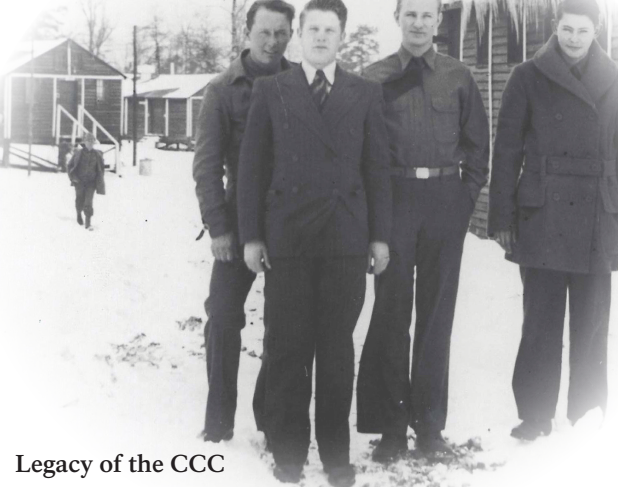
On the pay...

"...I helped send a brother and sister through high school. You could make extra money on the side if you were sharp, we had punch boards, they never

said anything to us. They paid me extra to train cooks, I guess I made more than most, \$45 a month was as high in salary as you could go, it didn't matter how smart you were."

On being naughty...

"We played tricks on the rookies, sent one out to milk a cow (no cows); couldn't find the cow, got lost [and] at roll call was AWOL!"



Legacy of the CCC

The Civilian Conservation Corps program effectively ended when America entered the Second World War. Its legacy, however, continues in many youth programs of today such as the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC), the Student Conservation Association (SCA), and Job Corps. While none of these programs profoundly effects such a large portion of the population as did the CCC, they each embody the Civilian Conservation Corps' spirit of providing educational, charitable, and experience-driven opportunities for America's youth.