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CREATING CONSUMERS:  
THE CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS IN  
ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK

By

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## ABSTRACT

President Franklin Roosevelt created the CCC in 1933 as part of a series of New Deal legislation. Like other byproducts of the “first hundred days,” Roosevelt and his administration intended the Corps to be a stimulant for the depressed economy. As historian Alan Brinkley argued, the early efforts of the New Deal were largely experimental, seeking to alleviate the wrecked economy, but also to reform the existing capitalist system. The CCC, like the other programs, was created by a breadth of government intervention that was, at the time, unprecedented. But unlike other programs that sought reform of institutions, the Corps sought reform of a particular demographic. And unlike other New Deal programs that created strong interest groups among previously weak political constituencies— workers, farmers, and women – the CCC sought to transform the lower-class young male enrollees into capitalist functionaries.

Using Rocky Mountain National Park as a case study, the following thesis seeks to extend beyond the uncritical, oft-used narrative of the CCC as beneficent social tool and examine it through experiences of administrators, enrollees, and the landscape that played a central role in its existence. Through vocational and civic educational programs, a monthly paycheck, National Park work programs, and by incorporating perceived transforming aspects of the mountainous landscape, the CCC administration attempted to inculcate the enrollees into a specific, classist ideal of a male “citizen” – a male breadwinner who aided the nation through his ability to provide for and act as the primary consumer of his family unit. Although consumption habits of CCC enrollees remain elusive, it is clear by examining enrollee reactions that, among other things, they valued their newfound ability to spend freely and understood the leverage gained in local communities by their consumption habits.

## INTRODUCTION

Reminiscing on his time spent as a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) enrollee in Rocky Mountain National Park, Monroe Smith remembered his experience there as the best time of his life. Ruben Foos, a fellow campmate, noted that all of the young men who volunteered for the CCC “were happy just to have work and a full stomach” during the Depression years.<sup>1</sup> The organization indeed provided shelter, food, and regular pay for young men who otherwise might have faced unemployment and impoverished living conditions. These memories, although highlighting sincere attitudes on the part of CCC veterans, fail to illustrate the complexity of this largely experimental relief program – the objectives of all of the social actors involved in the Corps and the results of their competing agendas. Using Rocky Mountain National Park as a case study, the following thesis seeks to extend beyond the uncritical, oft-used narrative of the CCC as beneficent social tool and examine it through experiences of administrators, enrollees, and the landscape that played a central role in its existence.

President Franklin Roosevelt created the CCC in 1933 as part of a series of New Deal legislation. Like other byproducts of the “first hundred days,” Roosevelt and his administration intended the Corps to be a stimulant for the depressed economy. As historian Alan Brinkley argued, the early efforts of the New Deal were largely experimental, seeking to alleviate the wrecked economy, but also to reform the existing capitalist system.<sup>2</sup> The CCC, like the other programs, was indeed created by a breadth of government intervention that was, at the time, unprecedented. But unlike other programs that sought reform of institutions, the Corps sought reform of a particular demographic. And unlike other New Deal programs that created strong interest groups among previously weak political constituencies– workers, farmers, and women – the CCC sought to transform the lower-class young male enrollees into capitalist functionaries.<sup>3</sup>

The Roosevelt and his administration had in mind two specific goals for the program: social and natural conservation. Both of these objectives aimed at preservation; the former focused on the nation’s youth and the latter on lands that were misused and eroding. The

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<sup>1</sup> Dan Campbell, “Low Pay and Hard Work Remain as Golden Memories for CCCers,” *Estes Park Trail*, 2 September 1983, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Alan Brinkley, *The End of Reform* (New York: Knopf, 1995).

<sup>3</sup> Brinkley, 4.

rhetoric of “conservation,” as applied to both the young enrollees and the landscape, became the ideological buttress of the CCC and unified the disparate groups who applauded the organization. As I argue in the thesis, an exploration of this ideology is important because it highlights the goals that the administration had for the young men who volunteered for the Corps – to transform these youth, largely from working-class families and on relief rolls, into a generation of male breadwinners with middle-class consumption habits that would continue to bolster a capitalist economy.<sup>4</sup> Through vocational and civic educational programs, a monthly paycheck, National Park work programs, and by incorporating perceived transforming aspects of the mountainous landscape, the CCC administration attempted to inculcate the enrollees into a specific, classist ideal of a male “citizen” – one who had a mind for labor but who also knew how to provide for the comforts of his family in ways that arguably exceeded his means. Although consumption habits of CCC enrollees remain elusive statistically speaking, it is clear by examining enrollee reactions that, among other things, they valued their newfound ability to spend freely and understood the leverage gained in local communities by their consumption habits.

Arguably, the CCC experience in Rocky Mountain National Park cannot be generalized to include camps involved in other conservation projects. CCC work in national parks had the specific goal of developing these landscapes for consumption by middle-class vacationers seeking the open road and spectacular scenery. Enrollee exposure to this type of lifestyle – one where automobile ownership and vacation time was common – furthered administrators’ goals of immersing the young men in modernity.

Before examining the CCC in detail, it is important to establish a broad contextual base for the program’s origins. Historians have established that the Corps was a personal favorite of Roosevelt’s, largely because of his own love of nature and personal history with conservation initiatives. On his Hyde Park estate, for instance, he worked with foresters to plant trees and practice fire suppression. As a New York senator, he continued experimenting with conservation policy and, along with the state commissioner of forests, established a state department of conservation. Shortly thereafter, while he was U.S. Secretary of the Navy, he accepted a position

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<sup>4</sup> To reinforce these claims, I draw largely upon primary literature, as well as on ideas from historians Eric Gorham and Olaf Stieglitz, highlighted in the literature review.

as the vice president of the New York State Forestry Association. Meanwhile he worked closely with leading forestry officials such as Gifford Pinchot, to develop a “scientific” understanding of wise land use. When reelected governor of New York in 1930, he again proved his commitment to conservation ethics by drafting a broad state land policy that had aims similar to later New Deal programs – electrification of rural farms, reforestation, and development of recreational areas.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, other countries and American states had already established conservation work as a means of relief. The most famous example was Germany’s Labor Service, directed by Adolph Hitler and criticized by many for its militaristic slant and overt political aims. Roosevelt denied that this program had any influence on the CCC legislation, but, as historian John Salmond notes, “a connection can perhaps be discerned.” The Labor Service had origins in the Weimar Republic and was only later co-opted for wholesale political uses. Stateside, the U.S. Forest Service in California and Washington already administered relief camps where men completed forestry projects; the Forest Service directed their work, and state and local authorities took responsibility for workers’ clothing and nourishment. Historians also traditionally mention William James when narrating the origins of the CCC. James, a Harvard academician, argued in his treatise, “The Moral Equivalent of War” for a national program that would employ youth on conservation projects. FDR, although a Harvard graduate, denied having read the essay. Still, James’ argument maps the basic ideas that underscored later CCC legislation.<sup>6</sup>

But the Roosevelt administration also created the CCC in response to the exigencies of the Depression years. The economy was not recovering from the 1929 crash and Roosevelt’s 1933 New Deal legislation sought to stabilize the nation’s spiraling financial crisis. FDR also endeavored to employ the jobless in work that benefited their morale (as opposed to accepting a government handout), and, in the case of the CCC, turn the tide on widespread land misuse. These aims culminated in Roosevelt’s Federal Unemployment Relief Act and subsequent Executive Order 6101, which created the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC).<sup>7</sup> Officially known as Emergency Conservation Work (ECW) until 1937, the CCC was an inter-departmental agency

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<sup>5</sup> A.L. Riesch Owen, *Conservation Under FDR* (New York: Praeger, 1983), 1-12.

<sup>6</sup> John Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1967), 1-5.

<sup>7</sup> John C Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Park Service, 1933-1942: An Administrative History* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1985),



that aimed at employing young men ages eighteen to twenty-five, who were single, in good health, and registered on relief rolls.<sup>8</sup> Although the majority of the roughly 200-man camps were made up of this young contingent, the CCC also created camps for veterans of World War I and Native Americans.<sup>9</sup> The program sought to engage all of these enrollees in conservation projects, ranging from soil conservation initiatives on the midwestern plains to land reclamation in western states and national recreational development.<sup>10</sup> ECW had a separate office headed by Robert Fechner, previously a labor leader, but other federal departments were responsible for its day-to-day operation: the Department of Labor oversaw recruitment of enrollees, the War Department (specifically the Army) enrolled the young men and administered the non-working aspects of their lives, and the Departments of Interior and Agriculture managed work projects.

Because Colorado natives made up seventy-five percent of the enrollees in their own state camps, it is important to understand the impact of the CCC there. Colorado was similar to many other western states during the Great Depression in that its economy was struggling even before the stock market crash of 1929. As yet unrecognized as a powerful tourist destination, the state depended on industries such as agriculture and manufacturing in the form of wholesale meatpacking and iron production. Both suffered acutely from profit and production losses because of the depression as well as from the paralyzing drought that plagued Colorado and other western states in 1931. In response to the falling economy, Coloradans attempted a number of relatively unsuccessful relief measures, including the establishment of provisional cooperatives throughout the state. By 1932, however, attempts to aid the growing number of unemployed citizens were failing from exhaustion of resources. Agricultural provisions were growing scarce and families were fighting hunger.<sup>11</sup>

Federal programs stepped in to supplant the efforts of state-based relief in 1933, and the citizenry of Colorado welcomed the aid. The gamut of New Deal programs had a presence in the state – the Federal Emergency Relief Act (FERA), the Civil Works Administration (CWA), the National Recovery Administration (NRA), the Public Works Administration (PWA), and the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA), the Works Progress Administration (WPA), and

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<sup>8</sup> Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*, 30.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 33-35.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> James F. Wickens, *Colorado in the Great Depression* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1979), 1-22; see also Robert Bruce Parham, "The Civilian Conservation Corps in Colorado, 1933-1942" (master's thesis, University of Colorado, 1981), 1-11.

the National Youth Administration (NYA). The CCC was one of the largest and longest of these programs in the state and arguably the most popular. In its nine years, there were a total of 164 camps throughout Colorado, working for Departments of Interior and Agriculture agencies such as the Bureau of Reclamation, the Soil Conservation Service, the Division of Grazing, the Forest Service, and, of course, the National Park Service. Enrollees worked on a variety of projects in conjunction with these agencies. In the drought-stricken plains of eastern Colorado, the Corps mostly worked to turn the tide on the harmful dry-land farming techniques adopted by farmers in the early twentieth century. They completed projects to promote soil and water conservation, such as building check dams and contour ditches.<sup>12</sup> In the western part of the state, camps were mostly located in the national forests, national parks and monuments, and in the state parks system. Their work, broadly, consisted of developing these spaces for increased tourist use. CCC workers also engaged in work projects for the Bureau of Reclamation, such as the massive Colorado-Big Thompson water diversion project. Ultimately, the CCC meant an additional \$56,000,000 for the Coloradan economy; the camps also provided work for much of the state's youth, as well as for older skilled workers who were hired by ECW funds as Local Experienced Men (L.E.Ms).<sup>13</sup> And the Corps invigorated the state's tourist economy, including that of Rocky Mountain National Park, which became a viable economic unit in the 1930s.

No existing historical work examined at length the Civilian Conservation Corps in Rocky Mountain National Park. The most relevant secondary sources are two histories of the Park: Lloyd K. Musselman's *Rocky Mountain National Park: Administrative History, 1915-1965*, which is divided into thematic chapters covering the first fifty years of the Park's existence, and C.W. Buchholtz's *Rocky Mountain National Park: A History*, a more broadly designed monograph, integrating larger themes of American history.<sup>14</sup> Although both authors stressed the theme of capitalistic conservation practices, they provided a relatively uncritical examination of the CCC; like many other narratives regarding the Corps, these authors present it and other New Deal programs as having a wholly positive presence in the Park. There are also few works that

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<sup>12</sup> Parham, "The Civilian Conservation Corps in Colorado," 94.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, iii; Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*, 34.

<sup>14</sup> Lloyd K. Musselman, *Rocky Mountain National Park: Administrative History, 1915-1965* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1971) 95-110; Buchholtz, *Rocky Mountain National Park: A History* (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1983), 184-187.

examine the CCC in Colorado, although Robert Bruce Parham devoted a thesis entirely to this subject. He contributed a valuable discussion of broad trends in community relationships with the Corps, an overview of political machinations in Colorado regarding the CCC, as well as insight into racial tensions that existed in camps all over the state. Despite examining negative aspects of the Corps, however, Parham still concluded that it was ultimately a successful experiment that provided a boost to the economy, jobs for youth, as well as vocational training for future careers.<sup>15</sup> James F. Wickens also provided a chapter on the CCC in his book *Colorado In the Great Depression*. The source offered important contextual information about New Deal reform in the state, but, except for acknowledging enrollee desertion, Wickens also avoided critical assessment of the CCC.<sup>16</sup>

The celebratory nature of much of the literature on the CCC, still part of public memory today, made up the whole of the work on the Corps until John Salmond's *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study*. Salmond's monograph examined the program from an administrative standpoint and provides the first lengthy assessment of the Corps. Salmond's conclusions are similar to those in other works that praise the program's efforts and affects, but he was the first to engage in a discussion concerning the negative implications of the Corps, such as its racist practices, as well as the complexities inherent in any large, wide-reaching program such as the CCC. Salmond's is the only full-length administrative history of the Corps. Since Salmond published his work in 1967, authors have written other, more critical works of the CCC, largely riding on the wave of social history, which came to critique the New Deal in general in the 1970s. Arguably the most unsympathetic of these is Eric Gorham's article on the Corps as a tool for state social control. Drawing heavily on Foucauldian interpretations of power and the state, Gorham concluded that the enrollees, through strict regimentation of their lives and works in the camps, were culturally indoctrinated into modern, bourgeois subjects.<sup>17</sup> Calvin Gower also documented the repressive tendencies of Army administrators who supervised the camps.<sup>18</sup> Olaf Stieglitz analyzed the underpinning gendered

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<sup>15</sup> Parham, "The Civilian Conservation Corps in Colorado," 154.

<sup>16</sup> Wickens, *Colorado in the Great Depression*, 128-156.

<sup>17</sup> Eric Gorham, "The Ambiguous Practices of the Civilian Conservation Corps," *Social History* 17, no. 2 (May 1992).

<sup>18</sup> Calvin Gower, "Conservation, Censorship and Controversy in the CCC, 1930s," *Journalism Quarterly* 1, no. 4 (Summer 1975).

ideology in CCC rhetoric, which aimed to transform young enrollees into responsible “citizens.”<sup>19</sup>

Other historians explore the racist practices of the Corps. Olen Cole made racism the subject of his relatively short monograph, *The African-American Experience in the Civilian Conservation Corps*.<sup>20</sup> Using camps in California as a case study, Cole documented the difficulties experienced by black enrollees who faced segregation and discrimination. Blacks were not the only racial minority who volunteered for the Corps; Maria E. Montoya, for instance, provided an examination of Chicano enrollees in New Mexican camps. Montoya argued that Chicanos, although never subjected to systematic racism in the Corps, nonetheless faced racist attitudes from white campmates and de facto segregation in camps.<sup>21</sup>

Several authors have explored New Deal conservation work, which was the centerpiece of the CCC’s existence. A.L. Reisch Owen produced a very sympathetic overview in 1983 of conservation policy enacted during Roosevelt’s tenure as president. She provided a useful examination of the philosophical foundations of conservation in the 1930s, arguing that the federal government’s interest in land usage policy began in John Quincy Adams’s administration. She included an uncritical chapter on CCC work that followed her premise of Roosevelt’s commitment to “scientific” forestry principles.<sup>22</sup> Phoebe Cutler’s work on the New Deal looked at recreational planning and land use. She asserted that New Deal public works and conservation programs led to the professionalization of landscape architects. More importantly, she documented the intersections of public policy, landscape planning, and the ideologies behind the constructed “natural” landscapes of the New Deal.<sup>23</sup> Linda McClelland similarly viewed recreational spaces as constructed spaces. Her work, focusing solely on design policy of the National Park Service, was intended to be a guide for the nomination of historical park structures

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<sup>19</sup> Olaf Stieglitz, “‘We may be losing this generation’: Talking About Youth and the Nation’s Future during the New Deal Era,” in *Visions of the Future in Germany and America*, eds. Norbert Finzsch and Hermann Wellenreuther (New York: Berg, 2001), 403-429.

<sup>20</sup> Cole Olen, Jr, *African-Americans in the Civilian Conservation Corps* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1999).

<sup>21</sup> Maria E. Montoya, “The Roots of Economic and Ethnic Divisions in Northern New Mexico: The Case of the Civilian Conservation Corps,” *The Western Historical Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (Spring 1995), 14-34.

<sup>22</sup> A.L. Reisch Owen, *Conservation under FDR* (New York: Praeger, 1983), 128-145.

<sup>23</sup> Phoebe Cutler, *The Public Landscape of the New Deal* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

to the National Register of Historic Places.<sup>24</sup> Although her study did not cover the CCC and other New Deal programs exclusively, she provided valuable insight into work program planning and design aesthetics. Unlike the rest of the authors, Richard West Sellars was critical of CCC conservation work because of its concern with aesthetic values at the expense of native ecosystems. His book also looked at broad National Park Service policy, but from the perspective of natural preservation. He concluded that from the Park Service's inception until at least the 1960s, policies orbited around an anthropocentric view of conservation. Park administrators catered to tourist expectations of wilderness, foregoing critical reactions by some in the scientific community. What he dubbed as "façade management" principles, were potentially harmful for native ecosystems.<sup>25</sup>

There are no lengthy works that examine consumption and the CCC, although several authors have explored the significance of consumers and the growth of mass consumption to new Deal policies. Alan Brinkley, for example, asserted that New Deal liberalism was, in its early years, committed to the reform of capitalism. As the depression years progressed, however, the Roosevelt administration gradually transformed its policy to include "both the idea and the reality of mass consumption ... becoming central to American culture and to the American economy."<sup>26</sup> Some historians, such as Ellis Hawley, contended that New Deal policies created a broker state that allowed previously powerless groups of society – workers, minorities, and women – to confront larger power structures.<sup>27</sup> Lizabeth Cohen applied this thesis to consumers as an aggregate group and adds that the Roosevelt administration, guided later by Keynesian economic policy, encouraged consumer rights and activism. Administration and other business interests advocated two types of consumers: citizen consumers, who "were regarded as responsible for safe-guarding the general good of the nation," and purchaser consumers, whose role as spenders was more valuable to the nation than their political activism.<sup>28</sup> She argued that women took on powerful roles as consumer citizens throughout the thirties and into World War

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<sup>24</sup> Linda McClelland, *Building the National Parks: Historic Landscape Design and Construction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

<sup>25</sup> Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks* (New Have: Yale University Press, 1997).

<sup>26</sup> Brinkley, 4.

<sup>27</sup> Ellis Hawley, *The New Deal and the Problem of Monopoly: A Study In Economic Ambivalence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966).

<sup>28</sup> Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Knopf, 2003), 19.

II. Cohen saw a gendered shift in ideas of consumption after World War II, when a broad range of interest groups, encouraged by government sanction, worked to create a Consumers' Republic in which men took on powerful consumer roles. Men were looked upon as the head of the financial resources of a family unit. Linda Gordon, for example, argued that New Deal policy, particularly Social Security, reinforced a male-dominated household economy.<sup>29</sup> I hope to illustrate that the Civilian Conservation Corps typifies this trend of the state implementing consumer ideology and laying the groundwork for a new generation of male breadwinners that fits within postwar consumption pattern.

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<sup>29</sup> Linda Gordon, *Pitied but Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare* (New York: Free Press, 1994). For the reaffirmation of gendered ideology in the Great Depression, see also Alice Kessler-Harris, "In the Nation's Image: The Gendered Limits of Social Citizenship in the Depression Era," *Journal of American History* 86, no. 3 (1999), 1251-1279.

## CHAPTER 1

### “WITNESS THE BOY-APPLICANT AND THE BOY-ENROLLEE:” THE CCC AND SOCIAL CONSERVATION<sup>30</sup>

Beyond acting as a relief measure, the Civilian Conservation Corps had an immediate moral imperative: to corral potentially reckless unemployed boys and transform them into responsible men. With numbers of unemployed youth swelling to more than two million (and recreational “social and civic agencies” closing their doors to the public because of the depression), many observers began to call for government intervention to target this demographic of young male adults.<sup>31</sup> According to some, leaving jobless youth to fend for themselves created a “menace to society” and, even worse, produced kindling for a revolution.<sup>32</sup> The creators of the CCC had specific methods for what they termed “social conservation,” including discipline, vocational and academic training, and exposing the enrollees to natural environments away from the perceived perils of the city. The camps, and their surrounding landscapes, would thus be spaces of rehabilitation, along with a vital force in Franklin D. Roosevelt’s plan to “conserve our precious natural resources.”<sup>33</sup> Social conservation ideology was replete with classist assumptions and ambivalent messages. Roosevelt and the upper tiers of his administration were successful in spreading the rhetoric so that supporters of the CCC spoke of its role in “conserving the social resources of the Nation.”<sup>34</sup> In Rocky Mountain National Park, the responsibility of implementing social conservation fell largely to Army reserve officers who oversaw daily life in the CCC camps.

Historians have concluded that social conservation rhetoric had very real objectives. Eric Gorham has argued that the Army used the CCC as a tool for social control and “bourgeois

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<sup>30</sup> Earl Kouns to directors of County Departments of Public Welfare, 29 March 1937, Box 2, Entry 32, “Division of Selection,” “State Procedural Records,” RG 35, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), College Park, Maryland [hereafter cited as state relief records].

<sup>31</sup> This unemployment figure is cited in George P. Rawick, “The New Deal and Youth: The Civilian Conservation Corps, the National Youth Administration, and the American Youth Congress,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1957), 23; Alfred E. Smith, “Unemployed Youth,” *New York Times*, 13 November 1932, p. XX2.

<sup>32</sup> Irene Kleff to Norma Y. Queen, 6 June 1934, state relief records; “Dire Need in Nation Told to Senators,” *New York Times*, 4 February 1933, p. 4.

<sup>33</sup> “The President’s Address,” reprinted in the *New York Times*, 22 March 1933, p. 2.

<sup>34</sup> Lee E. Wilson to Norma Y. Queen, 5 June 1934, state relief records.

cultural indoctrination”: he suggests that the camps, under the purview of rigid commanders, had “moralizing” affects on the mostly lower-class enrollees, and dissent, disobedience, and individuality were discouraged and even punished.<sup>35</sup> Olaf Stieglitz builds on Gorham’s thesis by arguing that the CCC specifically sought to transform the enrollees into a particular type of “citizen” – an idea that was essentially gendered in that the CCC experience socialized young men to become male breadwinners.<sup>36</sup> Although Gorham’s and Stieglitz’s assertions ignore individual agency among the officers and enrollees, an examination of the Rocky Mountain camps in chapter one validates their claims that the CCC was an agent for social regulation and even inculcation into middle-class values.

In one respect, the Army officers who directed enrollees in their daily lives were only acting in an arena already familiar to them – administrating large numbers of men. Their disciplinary and supervisory regulations were undoubtedly similar to those in a formal military context and not dependent upon or wedded to the particular rehabilitation goals of the CCC. Still, Army officials and Park technical staff appropriated the language of government and state administration and, if not wholly in agreement with its ideals, at least saw it as a useful tool. They repeatedly employed the rhetoric of social conservation when addressing enrollees to impart a sense of duty and deference. Army administrators further sought reform of the young men by imposing order through the built environment of the camps, employing strict military-like schedules, enacting a vocational education program, and meting out sometimes severe disciplinary measures. All of these methods were tools for implementing goals of social conservation.

In the newsletters of Park camps, Army officials utilized the lexicon of social conservation to instill ideas of cooperation, gratitude, and hard work among the enrollees. They assured the enrollees, in turn, that they would become men with the ability to enter the working world and serve as useful members of the citizenry of their state and country. The officials believed the environment of the camps would aid in this transformation, not only in the regulatory schedules of the workday, but also the in exposure to and coexistence with the august

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<sup>35</sup> Eric Gorham, “The Ambiguous Practices of the Civilian Conservation Corps,” *Social History* 17, no. 2 (May 1992), 230.

<sup>36</sup> Olaf Stieglitz, “‘We May Be Losing This Generation’: Talking about Youth and the Nation’s Future During the New Deal Era,” in *Visions of the Future in Germany and America*, eds. Norbert Finzsch and Hermann Wellenreuther (New York: Berg, 2001), 403-429.



peaks and valleys of the Park itself. This philosophy became the intangible framework that guided work and life in the Park, at least through the eyes of administration.

Letters from the Colorado State Relief Office allow a closer look at the larger ideology that camp administration employed in Rocky Mountain CCC camps. In 1934, Alice E. van Diest, the Colorado State Relief Officer, queried Colorado county relief directors regarding their opinions of the social value of the Civilian Conservation Corps. She then submitted the replies from the county directors to Frank Persons, director of the Department of Labor that served as the recruiting arm of the federal CCC program. The letters vary in response, but most paint a positive, idealistic portrait of the nascent organization, summarizing tangible and intangible benefits that the boys and their families had begun to enjoy. Other replies offer more pragmatic, even critical assessments of the CCC, noting that social conservation was not and should not be the basis of such a program. In all cases, the letters offer not only a telling account of contemporary Coloradan attitudes towards their state camps, they also highlight larger principles of social conservation that federal, state, and local administration used to buttress the significance of the Corps. The responses directly reflect camp structures of discipline, work, and social conditioning in Rocky Mountain. This chapter does not attempt to analyze long-term social affects of the CCC; directors' responses indicate that there was no uniform camp experience. Instead, the State Department of Public Welfare letters help to define the parameters of what constituted "social conservation."

The letters almost unanimously agree on the popularity of the Corps and its goals of reformation. According to the county directors, none of the New Deal's palliative efforts were as widely embraced as the CCC. One writer noted that the Corps was more popular and less critiqued than any other public works program.<sup>37</sup> Many other letters shared the impression that the organization had virtually ubiquitous acceptance: "The reaction of parents, boys, and the public to the CCC movement has been uniformly favorable ... as all feel ... the benefits, both financial and social...."<sup>38</sup> The reaction of the public, although filtered through the county directors' perspectives, suggests that popular attitudes paralleled those of national administrators: there was a need for social intervention on the part of the federal government.

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<sup>37</sup> Eldred H. Shaeffer to Norma Y. Queen, 4 June 1934, state relief records. Norma Queen was the assistant to Van Diest, and so the letters were addressed to her instead of the director.

<sup>38</sup> Henry Frigado to Norma Y. Queen, 2 June 1934, state relief records.

Much of the praise focused on the immediate benefits of the Corps. A mother from Monte Vista, Colorado, boasted that, “her son had gained twenty pounds since he went to camp and had grown two inches.”<sup>39</sup> In a more dramatic account, the relief director from Las Animas County described the changes in enrollee Victor Machetto, who, before volunteering for the CCC, was “thin and emaciated.” After time in camp, he “increased from ninety to one hundred and thirty-eight pounds. He can run, catch, and throw with any of them now” (previously, he was too weak to enjoy his love of baseball). Due to this growth in physical vigor, “his mental ability has increased a hundredfold.”<sup>40</sup> Many enrollees went through a similar change; with enrollment periods of at least six months and the option to reenlist, enrollees had long-term access to three hearty meals a day, adequate shelter, and healthcare services supplied by a camp doctor. To many people – parents, enrollees, and administrators alike – the CCC represented a space of guaranteed sustenance, which was in itself strong rationale for the program’s existence.

The most often cited benefits, however, were in response to the growth of unemployed and transient youths. Public preoccupation with the welfare and morals of youth was in no way a new phenomenon. Concerns about youth as a distinct age group apart from adults began in the late nineteenth century as the country experienced increased industrialization and urbanization. Fears grew that the “vice” found in the ever-growing cities would turn groups of young people into gangs of reprobates. Progressive reformers, such as Jane Addams, sought to enact child labor legislation and establish juvenile reform schools to combat to the “problem” of urban youth. National attention again turned to the welfare of the nation’s youth after the economic recession and subsequent unemployment crisis in the early 1920s. Popular youth culture in that decade also led to an outcry against the perceived lasciviousness and aberrant behavior of adolescents and teenagers. President Herbert Hoover, by the end of the twenties, agreed that state intervention was necessary to reform the younger generations and transform them into proponents of American values (democracy and capitalism).<sup>41</sup>

In the 1930s, the depression left many, including those in younger generations and from rural areas, unemployed. The public was relieved when the government stepped in to counter the problem of jobless youth and transients. In a previous effort to combat the problem of transients

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<sup>39</sup>Frances B. Peters to Norma Y. Queen, Rio Grande County, Colorado, 6 June 1934, state relief records.

<sup>40</sup>“What Civilian Conservation Corps Have Meant to Las Animas County, Colorado,” n.d., state relief records.

<sup>41</sup> Richard A. Reiman, *The New Deal and American Youth: Ideas and Ideals in a Depression Decade* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 11-26.

in particular, Colorado and other state relief agencies created unemployment “camps,” but these were largely made up of families and older men.<sup>42</sup> The CCC, on the other hand, focused on recruiting a younger male demographic (ages eighteen to twenty-five), specifically from county relief rolls.<sup>43</sup> Federal administration and state officials had a clear perception that lower-class boys were likely to cause social disturbances if left unattended and without work. At the very heart of social conservation was the objective to gainfully employ these potentially disruptive and “idle” young men. As one county director said, joblessness “is directly responsible for a large portion of mischief and crime committed by such boys and young men.” According to this man, the CCC camps were wholly effective in combating this perceived problem – they filled “a very urgent need for recreation and employment for them, and the clean healthy lives which they have an opportunity to live, the separation from idle and sometimes vicious associates, has changed their general outlook towards the future.”<sup>44</sup> By removing these young men from “the streets,” many agreed the Corps was providing a community service and a necessary penal function.

The aim of turning enrollees into “self reliant and happy citizens,” a concept strongly tied with nationalist sentiments, dominated the rhetoric of those who espoused support for the Corps in the letters.<sup>45</sup> Gorham argues that “CCC citizenship” translated into “quiescence under the agency’s gaze” and that camp disciplinary structures focused on molding boys into deferential subjects of the state.<sup>46</sup> Although a rigid interpretation, Gorham’s claim is to some extent validated by the letters from Colorado relief directors. They reflect popular attitudes concerning the role that the Corps would play in the life of its volunteers, namely that of creating “good citizenship” among the young men.<sup>47</sup> The Colorado welfare directorate was straightforward in acknowledging the objectives of the Corps: “To round the boy out into the man, the man into the

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<sup>42</sup> Lorena Hickok to Harry Hopkins, 25 June 1934, *One-Third of a Nation: Lorena Hickok Reports on the Great Depression*, eds. Maurine Beasley and Richard Lowitt (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 297.

<sup>43</sup> John A. Salmund, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1967), 30. The age and financial requirements eventually grew less stringent as the CCC faced recruitment problems.

<sup>44</sup> Lee E. Wilson to Mrs. Norma Y. Queen, Romeo, Colorado, 5 June 1934, state relief records.

<sup>45</sup> Eldred H. Schaeffer to Norma Y. Queen, 4 June 1934, state relief records.

<sup>46</sup> Gorham, “The Ambiguous Practices of the Civilian Conservation Corps,” 249.

<sup>47</sup> Eldred H. Shaiffer to Norma Y. Queen, 4 June 1934, state relief records.

citizen, who will recognize his obligations, who will be faithful to his allegiance to the United States, and who in all situations will conduct himself with dignity and restraint.”<sup>48</sup>

In the context of the CCC, the term “citizen” had a specific definition. Administrators expected the enrollees, because of their class and educational backgrounds, to become cogs in the larger wheel of civic life, achieving political responsibility only through their ability to fit into the market economy and financially support themselves and their families. In an educational survey of the CCC, Kenneth Holland and Frank Ernest Hill dubbed this particular role as “conforming citizenship”: the enrollees, after their tenure in camp, would be able to function on a basic level in society and be financially and economically responsible, independent, literate, and have respect for government and authority. This type of citizenship contrasted with what Holland and Hill referred to as “contributing citizenship,” which called for a strong knowledge of governmental operations, direct political action when necessary, familiarity with current events, and a deep understanding of democratic principles.<sup>49</sup> The “conforming” notion of citizenship, as Olaf Steiglitz asserts, was fundamentally gendered; by placing enrollees in an all-male atmosphere and celebrating “working-class notions of masculinity like physical activity and aggressive competition” the enrollees, as young men, were to gain the skills needed to become independent breadwinners and thus move into manhood and a dutiful place in society.<sup>50</sup> Ultimately, the enrollees learned that their role as citizen meant that their “individual effort must be embedded in collective and centrally guided action.”<sup>51</sup> CCC administrators would act as this guiding force to transition enrollees into their new role.

To prepare enrollees for life as “self-sustaining units” in larger society, the Corps implemented a vocational education program.<sup>52</sup> Camp educational advisors and technical staff taught work-related skills in mostly vocational courses as well as through hands-on work in daily job projects. According to the relief director in Central City, Colorado, the job-training component of the Corps was of immeasurable value: “Boys who have heretofore ... had no

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<sup>48</sup> “Annual Report, 1937,” Colorado State Department of Public Welfare, state relief records.

<sup>49</sup> Kenneth Holland and Frank Ernest Hill, *Youth in the CCC* (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1942), 222.

<sup>50</sup> Olaf Steiglitz, “‘We May be Losing This Generation’: Talking about Youth and the Nation’s Future during the New Deal Era,” in *Visions of the Future in Germany and America*, eds. Norbert Finzsch and Hermann Wellenreuther (New York: Berg, 2001), 426.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 417.

<sup>52</sup> “Throngs Here Rush for Forestry Jobs,” *New York Times*, 7 April 1933, p. 3

opportunity to receive employment and who had no real conception of what is required by business and industry of its employees, are receiving in the CCC camps, training necessary to take their proper places in the struggle for life.”<sup>53</sup> These “proper” places meant the boys would learn to accept hard work as a reality, as well as learn skills that would help them acquire employment after their tenure in camp. This attitude, which was shared by CCC administrators at all levels, was largely based on classist attitudes toward the enrollee, and the educational program reflected that bias. The courses focused almost solely on preparing the boys for semi-skilled labor jobs in construction and industry, showing little confidence that the enrollees were capable of social or class mobility. The primary concern was only that the young men “become independent and ... assume real responsibility.”<sup>54</sup>

Vocational skills were rooted in an aim to cultivate economic capability, which was also a sign of manhood and a prerequisite for reentering the community as a citizen. According to the Colorado relief directors, these young men were learning what it meant to work for their pay rather than passively accepting government handouts. The job training offered in the Corps helped one woman’s son gain a positive attitude and the ability to “meet men on a man’s footing and to be accepted as one.”<sup>55</sup> Again, the idea of the male breadwinner shaped popular expectations of the affects that the Corps would have on young men who entered its ranks.

Formal training in civic life was also a component of the CCC administration’s ideal of citizenship for enrollees. Educational programs often held mandatory lectures focusing on the role of the government. But these classes were less concerned with teaching legislative processes, for instance, than to acclaim the government’s new expanded role in state and community relief and planning efforts. As Holland and Hill noted, such classes also served to “teach the principles of democracy within an authoritarian atmosphere.”<sup>56</sup> In response to these initiatives, the letters expressed pleasure that the young men “are now more appreciative of organized government and constituted authority. They seem to have obtained a new viewpoint of government and its purposes.”<sup>57</sup> Although the success of these initiatives is difficult to

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<sup>53</sup> Eldred H. Shaiffer to Norma Y. Queen, 4 June 1934, state relief records.

<sup>54</sup> Dorothy D. Hutchinson to Norma Y. Queen, 7 June 1934, state relief records.

<sup>55</sup> Catherine Alexandre to Norma Y. Queen, 7 June 1934, state relief records.

<sup>56</sup> Holland and Hill, *Youth in the CCC*, 224.

<sup>57</sup> Eldred H. Shaiffer to Norma Y. Queen, 4 June 1934, state relief records

measure, there clearly existed an objective to create a sense of obedience and duty among enrollees.

In addition, social conservation ideology stressed that discipline and a regimented lifestyle were particularly important for imparting obedience to social hierarchies. One county director noted that, “the discipline has been the most beneficial, especially to boys who are inclined to be rebellious and head-strong at home.”<sup>58</sup> Although the CCC administration took pains to emphasize that the camps were non-militaristic, the Army reserve commanders kept the enrollees on a strict schedule of work, rest, and recreation. They lived in barracks, slept in bunks, and wore uniforms. The Army permanently expelled those who caused disturbances or did not follow instructions and used the threat of punishment as a means to control and eradicate unwanted influences among the young men. Technical supervisors of the Departments of Interior and Agriculture oversaw work projects, but it was the Army that had the final command over enrollees. When county directors told of the “military smartness” of returning enrollees, they were likely not exaggerating.

Administrators also perceived the CCC to be an initiation into masculinity and power. The successful enrollee would endure tests of strength and will that would be the ultimate polish to his induction into manhood and citizenship. County relief directors, for instance, expected new enrollees to be part of a hazing process upon entering the camps. One director noted that, “initiations must take place” and the ability of an enrollee to successfully defend himself made him “a highly respected member of the Camp.”<sup>59</sup> Officials argued that this type of self-defense would ultimately prepare the young men for daily life in the working world. Manual labor in the Corps further increased an enrollee’s physical prowess. A director observed that after several months in the CCC, young men became “strong and husky” because of their work and able to gain more respect when they returned to their communities.<sup>60</sup> Transformations into manhood were apparent to the county relief directors in the enrollee’s changed bodies. Many letters comment on the “erect carriage” and physical stature of returning enrollees, noting that the boys wore their uniforms and newfound confidence as if they were “on parade.”<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, they

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<sup>58</sup> Alice D. Morison to Norma Y. Queen, Sterling, Colorado, 6 June 1934, state relief records.

<sup>59</sup> County Director of Rifle, Colorado to Norma Y. Queen, n.d., state relief records.

<sup>60</sup> Irene Kleff to Norma Y. Queen, 6 June 1934, state relief records.

<sup>61</sup> Lee E. Wilson to Norma Y. Queen, 5 June 1934, state relief records.

argued that the Corps instilled a “broader outlook on life” – boys who had once faced the future with grim resignation now felt renewed hope of employment and personal success.<sup>62</sup>

One of the most important factors in the CCC’s status as rite-of-passage was its emphasis on rural life and the outdoors. The natural environment took on the role of redeemer – Roosevelt assured Congress that by removing unemployed young men to “healthful surroundings ... we can eliminate to some extent at least the threat that forced idleness brings to spiritual and moral stability.”<sup>63</sup> The relationship between the men and their surroundings at camp was supposed to work reciprocally: while the enrollees engaged the landscape in conservation efforts, the grandeur of the landscape and the open space would have rehabilitating affects on the them. The emphasis on space was particularly important and represented to many the oppositional qualities of a rural life versus an urban one, or the young man’s propensity to submit to a life of crime. This concern for the evil influences of an urban environment, particularly in conjunction with immorality and youth, had roots in Progressive-era reformation. Justin Miller, the chairman of the Attorney General’s Advisory Committee on Crime in the 1930s, reported on the link between crime and spaciousness of physical environment: “A typical delinquent history paints a picture of a neighborhood full of corrupting influences and lacking in recreational facilities – often a slum district, where overcrowding, lack of ventilation, and cleanliness are prevalent.” Miller argued that the CCC camps, however, offered “a clean wholesome environment, free from corrupting influences. The outdoor life provides few of the conflicts of a crowded city.”<sup>64</sup>

Administrators in Colorado also emphasized a dualism that cast urban life as potentially debasing and pastoral life as virtuous. One county director noted how the “newly instilled love of the open air” was repeatedly victorious over the influences of dubious activities in city poolrooms.<sup>65</sup> These state administrators, following the lead of national officials, imbued nature with virtuous qualities and gave it credit for helping to change the young men into responsible adults.

The transforming power of nature was especially potent in Rocky Mountain National Park, where enrollees were surrounded by “high rugged peaks..., primeval forests, scattered

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<sup>62</sup> Rio Blanco County E.R.A. Committee to Norma Y. Queen, state relief records.

<sup>63</sup> “The President’s Address,” 22 March 1933, p. 2.

<sup>64</sup> Quoted in Robert Fechner, “The Civilian Conservation Corps Program,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 194, “The Prospect for Youth,” (Nov., 1937), 138.

<sup>65</sup> Catherine Alexandre, 7 June 1934, state relief records.

groves, and eternal snowfields.”<sup>66</sup> The Park, a roughly 405 square-mile expanse of towering mountains, deep canyons, and expanding glacial parks did indeed provide awe-inspiring vistas for all who lived and worked within its boundaries.<sup>67</sup> Because the camps were located in the Park and “away from depression clad cities and communities,” enrollees gained “a new reserve on health,” stronger morals, and the ability to reenter their former communities as capable workers and citizens.<sup>68</sup>

The “camp” setting was particularly important in connecting the young men with their surrounding environments. The enrollees in the Park were largely isolated from the nearby towns and villages and nestled in picturesque valleys in the interiors of the Park boundary. Although the camps were equipped with modern amenities, the structures and facilities were very basic and required the enrollees to adapt to a rustic lifestyle. Typical camps included sleeping quarters for the men, a mess hall, a latrine, hospital quarters, a recreation hall (which, in the case of most Rocky Mountain camps, doubled as an education building), officer’s quarters, administration buildings, and a garage. The makeup and material of the buildings depended on the operation of each camp. For instance, there were six camps in Rocky Mountain and only three were permanent. If the camp was only in use in the summer, such as NP-1, NP-3, and NP-7, the barracks and hospital remained as pyramidal tents with wooden support structures. If the Corps inhabited the camps year-round, as in the case of NP-4, NP-11, and NP-12, all buildings were made of wood or, in later cases, were prefabricated.<sup>69</sup>

When constructing the camps, officials were obliged to concede to the topography of the Front Range. The layout of the camps, although taken from a standardized military blueprint, had to conform to the particular terrain of the campsite.<sup>70</sup> Officials chose locations in the Park based on their planar features and accessibility from roads and trails, but finding such spaces could be difficult. Army officers, for instance, had to make a nine-mile trek on foot to find an

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<sup>66</sup> Enos A. Mills, *The Rocky Mountain National Park* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1932), 19.

<sup>67</sup> C.W. Buchholtz, *Rocky Mountain National Park: A History* (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1983), 136. Rocky Mountain National Park began with 358.5 square miles in 1916, but by 1941 the National Park Service had increased the Park’s landmass to 405 square miles.

<sup>68</sup> 1st Lt. William J. Magill, “To the Fathers and Mothers,” reprinted in *Texas Tidbits*, 28 January 1937, p. 4.

<sup>69</sup> John A. Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps: A New Deal Case Study* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1967), 136.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*



adequate locale for NP-1.<sup>71</sup> Once they agreed upon a site, officers, Park employees, and enrollees constructed the buildings, always mindful of the surrounding contours of the land. Pictures of the camps illustrate that the structures follow directional patterns of the adjacent mountains and moraines; although the camps do not blend in with the scenery, officials attempted to stitch them into the existing seams of the landscape. In its final form, the CCC camp looked nothing like overcrowded urban street scenes. Instead, it was small, organized into simple row or circle patterns, and, of course, was beyond the reach of traffic, smog, and bustling people.

The CCC administrators acquiesced to the terrain during camp construction, but, once established, they used the built environment to impress order and regulation upon the enrollees. Most camps in the Park were linear in form, with many buildings aligned in two rows and divided by a company road. Outlying buildings were also neatly arranged, often perpendicular to the main structures. The very particular arrangement of the camp space made for an organized environment that was free from disarray and clutter; officials clearly delineated the boundaries of the camp and thus the acceptable movements of the enrollees, who were not allowed to leave the camp without permission. The enrollees developed a “sense of being in a regulated environment” and, in this way, the camps aided in larger reform and disciplinary objectives of CCC officials.<sup>72</sup>

Army administrators implemented the reformatory measures spelled out by social conservation within the larger organized spaces of the camps. They enforced strict work and rest schedules there were constructed in military-style time increments, with emphases on punctuality, cleanliness, and order. The men awoke at six o’clock each weekday to reveille from the camp bugler and immediately made their bed and straightened their barracks, had breakfast at seven, and left for work projects at eight. Work began at nine and stopped at noon for lunch. The workday ended at four when enrollees returned to their camps. There, Army officials expected them to shower before supper at five; after the meal they had a four-hour free period to engage in coursework or recreational activities. All activities shut down for the evening at ten

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<sup>71</sup> “Army Officer Lauds Park Camp Location,” *Estes Park Trail*, 5 May 1933, p.1.

<sup>72</sup> Gorham, “The Ambiguous Practices of the Civilian Conservation Corps,” 235.

o'clock.<sup>73</sup> The officers made daily inspections of the barracks as well as kept watch over the appearance of the men at all times. They kept each barrack on a graded point system where individual members could affect the overall evaluation for the better or worse. Officials warned enrollees that, "if a man is dirty or does not have on his O.D.'s and tie ... it will count off on his Barracks the next day."<sup>74</sup>

The officers repeatedly lectured enrollees about the importance of cooperation and following the rules and guidelines of the camp – lessons that would prepare the young men for lives as responsible citizens. They encouraged the enrollees to suppress their need for "special privileges" and to not consider themselves an "exception." Instead, they stressed that in a group society, which included the camps, the enrollees should expect to "play the game according to the rules" or "take the consequences."<sup>75</sup> They also reminded the young men to feel grateful for all that the Corps offered; if not for the Corps, the enrollees would surely be "working for Street and Walker at nothing a day...."<sup>76</sup> Some of the administrators were much more emotional in stressing obedience and gratitude. One park supervisor commanded enrollees to "thank God we are living and working in the U.S.A." where "Uncle Sam is and will spend millions on rehabilitation and offering the youth of our country the opportunity to prepare for a life of usefulness and happiness...."<sup>77</sup> Some officials clearly took the rhetoric of social conservation seriously and genuinely attempted to impress it upon the young men.

There were consequences for those enrollees who did not cooperate and fit into such officials' prescribed roles for them in the Corps. The most severe was discharge from the Corps and administrators used it to punish disobedience, recreant attitudes, and to teach a lesson to other enrollees who may have had wayward tendencies. In 1935, for instance, ninety young men struck at Camp NP-4 in defense of camp truck drivers. Rather than compromise with or even acknowledge enrollee demands, camp administration discharged everyone involved.<sup>78</sup> J.C.

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<sup>73</sup> Letter from 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. William J. Magill to parents of enrollees, reprinted in *Texas Tidbits*, Company 3884, Camp NP-4-C, 28 January 1937; Leslie Alexander Lacy, *The Soil Soldiers: The Civilian Conservation Corps in the Great Depression* (Radnor, Pennsylvania: Chilton Book Company, 1976), 177.

<sup>74</sup> "Cooperation," *Texas Tidbits*, Company 3884, Camp NP-4-C, 25 December 1936, p. 4.

<sup>75</sup> "Proofs," *Long's Peak Joker*, Company 1812, Camp NP-3-C, 6 August 1934.

<sup>76</sup> *Long's Peak Joker*, Company 1812, Camp NP-4-C, 26 November 1934.

<sup>77</sup> D.W. Haggerty, "Seventh Anniversary of USCCC is Celebrated Today," *The Echo*, Company 3884, Camp NP-4-C, 4 April 1940.

<sup>78</sup> "Ninety CCC Men Given Discharge After Strike," *Estes Park Trail*, 4 October 1935, p.1.

Roak, a CCC administrator for Army headquarters, was confident that, “the firing of that number of men certainly should make the balance of them set up and take notice.”<sup>79</sup>

In keeping with broader ideas of social conservation, the Army officials at Rocky Mountain encouraged the young men to take advantage of the educational opportunities in the camps. Glenn Langley, the educational advisor for NP-4 in the mid-thirties, reminded enrollees that, “Your providing Uncle has foreseen the value to the U.S. of a trained CCC personnel. He has put an educational program in every camp, to give self improvement opportunities to all who desire to benefit themselves.”<sup>80</sup> Camps in Rocky Mountain had educational programs throughout their existence, although they differed in breadth and scope during those years. This lack of uniformity was typical of the CCC educational program in general; academic education was never a high priority of President Roosevelt, CCC director Robert Fechner, or the War Department. Although educational advisors were not enlisted Army men, they fell under the purview of the Army command system and had to operate with little funding and often times indifferent attitudes of camp administration. The Army acknowledged the importance of education, but most of its commanders put their weight behind vocational programs that they believed would prove more beneficial to the men who needed jobs after completing their tenure in the CCC.<sup>81</sup>

The educational programs in Rocky Mountain always centered largely on vocational and “on-the-job” training. The educational advisor, Park technical staff, or Army staff would instruct in courses such as truck driving, auto mechanics, bulldozer operation, concrete construction, carpentry, saw mill operation, cooking and baking, and typing or clerical work.<sup>82</sup> Much of the training occurred on work sites, but some classes were held wherever the camp had designated educational space, such as in the recreation or mess halls, or in Park Service facilities. At the end of the courses, usually allotted for three-month time periods, the men could earn proficiency or unit certificates that signified their “meritorious progress” in a particular skill and ultimately acted as a reference for future jobs.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> J.C. Roak to George Carlson, 10 October 1935, George Carlson Papers, Western Historical Collection, Denver Public Library, Denver, Colorado.

<sup>80</sup> *Texas Tidbits*, Company 3884, Camp NP-4, 26 November 1936.

<sup>81</sup> Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942*, 50, 162-168.

<sup>82</sup> This list is a sampling of courses taken from various educational reports of all camps. For other classes, see the educational reports attached to camp inspection files in NARA DC, RG 35, E 115, Boxes 37-38.

<sup>83</sup> “Graduation Exercises,” *The Estes Sentinel*, Company 1812, Camp NP-4-C, 4 April 1935, p. 5.

Educational advisors also conducted classes in citizenship, which were often mandatory for the enrollees. In one such instance, the advisor at NP-4 held a forum entitled “Purpose of Our Government” that included several speakers from the camp administration. They lectured on the history of government in the United States, as well as its “purposes and functions.” Under the subject heading “Duties of citizens,” enrollees learned their future responsibilities: “voting, taxes, protect [our] country, develop ourselves, and becoming informed.”<sup>84</sup> These duties were part of the larger goals of social conservation to transform enrollees into “conforming citizens” – men who would contribute to society by supporting themselves and their families, upholding proper “moral conduct,” understanding laws and abiding by them, and generally measuring up “to the minimum qualifications of citizenship.”<sup>85</sup> The educational advisor noted, in the case of the class, that, “The subject chosen was ... somewhat beyond the comprehension of the average of the audience.” Although classes on government and citizenship continued in the camps, this observation illustrates that administrators in Rocky Mountain expected little from the young men in the Corps in the way of civic awareness on any level.

Army officials in Rocky Mountain were certain that the Corps could aid in creating strong citizens by transforming the enrollees into adult men. The CCC as an organization, they argued, conserved “America’s greatest resource – its young manhood.”<sup>86</sup> Through experiences in the Corps, the enrollees would gain “freedom, independence, cockiness and virility,” but those traits would also be tempered with “making your own way, fighting your own battles, and taking the consequences of your own mistakes and failures.”<sup>87</sup> All of these lessons would be essential for life as men in the working world and existing as a “conforming citizen.”

Beyond the practical aspects of life and work in the camps, officials looked to the landscape as an agent of change or, more specifically, as a rite of passage for enrollees to enter into manhood. They imbued the winter season in particular with the ability to harden and mold the young enrollees into men. Winters in the Rocky Mountains could indeed be bitterly cold, windy, and isolating, and camp personnel cautioned the enrollees as the winter months approached. The winter season, company commander Leo Noble warned, meant “the

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<sup>84</sup> “Report on Camp Forum,” supplemental report to Camp Inspection Report, NP-4-C, 20 August 1936, Box 38, Entry 115, “Camp Inspection Reports, 1933-1942,” RG 35, NARA II.

<sup>85</sup> Holland and Hill, *Youth in the CCC*, 222.

<sup>86</sup> D.W. Haggerty, “Good-Bye Old Friends,” *The Bay State Sentinel*, Company 2138, Camp NP-11-C, 21 March 1940, p. 14.

<sup>87</sup> Glenn Langley, “Out on Your Own,” *Texas Tidbits*, Company 3884, Camp NP-4-C, n.d., p. 2.

toughening of ourselves a little.”<sup>88</sup> Enrollees would be faced with working in frigid temperatures and severe winds that sounded as if “all the banshees of hell have just sat on a hot tack.”<sup>89</sup> Officials likened the experience to that of early white settlers in the region, noting that enrollees who weathered the winter months developed a “hardy pioneer spirit.”<sup>90</sup> These conditions, they argued, would only work to build character, rugged strength, and increased perseverance – all vital qualities of manhood.

Army and Park officials’ use of social conservation rhetoric mirrored that of state and national administrators. They focused on reforming the enrollees from perceived potential delinquents into mature citizens who would take their place in society as hard workers and breadwinners. Officials approached their task with a positive outlook, confident that the camps in Rocky Mountain would live up to the national objectives laid out by Roosevelt and his administration. They failed to express doubt about their own roles in this process, even when faced with high desertion rates and poor morale on the part of the enrollees. In short, they felt successful in implementing the goals of social conservation.

Still, there were critics who felt social conservation efforts had limitations. As the Colorado State Relief Office letters intimate, some thought the makeup of the Civilian Conservation Corps would simply not allow for any sort of moral reform. The relief director of Larimer County argued that parents and boys alike saw no other benefit other than collecting the twenty-five dollar allotment every month: “A great many of them do not seem to know what it is all about and take no interest whatever in the actual value of the work ... but think only of the minimum amount of work they might be able to get by with and still draw their \$30.00 per month.”<sup>91</sup> Others complained of laziness. Enrollee Albert Zoppelli estimated that “75% of [enrollees] are either there to get out of work, or because they were forced to go.” This lack of enthusiasm caused boys to take “inherent pleasure” in causing disorder within the camps, thus subverting goals of social rehabilitation.<sup>92</sup>

Other criticism focused on the social limitations of the Corps. One anonymous writer put it bluntly: “Social conservation is desired, but can hardly be expected in the Civilian

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<sup>88</sup> Leo A. Noble, “So This is Winter,” *Long’s Peak Echo*, Company 3884, September 1938, p. 1.

<sup>89</sup> Bob Thorson, “Winter Breezes,” *Long’s Peak Echo*, 28 October 1938, p. 5.

<sup>90</sup> “All Water Lines in Camp Frozen,” *Texas Tidbits*, Company 3884, Camp NP-4-C, 28 January 1937, p. 7.

<sup>91</sup> Federal Emergency Relief Administration of Larimer County to Norma Y. Queen, 6 June 1934, state relief records.

<sup>92</sup> Albert Zoppelli to W.E. Runge, 10 April 1934, state relief record.

Conservation Corps, due to the bringing together of types and classes into what are – in this vicinity – at least really segregated groups.” According to this observer, the CCC drew many of its volunteers from a lower social class who did not possess “social competency,” thus leading him to ask the question, “can something be preserved that isn’t there to begin with?”<sup>93</sup> In addition, Colorado experienced racial divisions. In many other states, particularly those of the southeast, CCC camps were strictly segregated.<sup>94</sup> Colorado’s minority populations, however, were comparatively small and black, white, and Hispanic enrollees were grouped together, particularly in the early years of the Corps. This caused problems among the white majority. One director reported that, “the only complaint that seemed to be general was the fact that in the first camps there was, naturally, in our locality, a large majority of Mexicans.” Instead of placing racial groups in segregated camps, however, the Colorado camps created separate barracks for the men. It is unclear if barracks were segregated in Rocky Mountain, but racial problems also affected camps there and will be explored in depth in chapter three. Ultimately, the CCC administration understood that social conservation was only effective if its subjects were willing. In the letters, county relief directors lament that many young men refused to take advantage of the opportunities presented by camp life or chose to desert altogether. They make it clear, however, that failure rested with the young men, not with any inherent problems of the Corps. One director observed that, “those boys who do not favor the camps seem to be ones who fail to adjust properly to group life.”<sup>95</sup> Administrators continued to blame enrollee dispositions when high desertion rates became a problem in Colorado. The state relief office took pains to emphasize to county directors that they select only “the best available applicants.”<sup>96</sup> To them, that meant the boy must be from a needy family, have need for vocational training, and, most importantly, not be “physically disabled or immature.”<sup>97</sup> Most officials failed to acknowledge that the CCC was problematic in its goals as a social experiment.

The same was true for administrators at Rocky Mountain National Park. They held fast that their work added “new hope and vigor to the nation.” It taught young men that a paycheck was “conditional on personal effort” and aided in their growth by removing them from

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<sup>93</sup> Anon., attached with correspondence from Alice E. van Diest to Frank W. Persons, 29 June 1934, state relief records.

<sup>94</sup> Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*, 91.

<sup>95</sup> Frances B. Peters to Norma Y. Queen, 5 June 1934, state relief records.

<sup>96</sup> Earl M. Kouns to Colorado County Departments of Public Welfare, 28 June 1937, state relief records.

<sup>97</sup> Earl M. Kouns to Colorado County Departments of Public Welfare, 15 January 1937, state relief records.

“congested cities to the land.”<sup>98</sup> Administrators were glad to weed the camps of “weak sisters” – those enrollees who deserted or possessed bad attitudes toward their lives in the CCC.<sup>99</sup> Again, it was clear that those who left or did not take advantage of opportunities in the Corps not only had themselves to blame, but also failed to make a transition into their role as men and citizens.

CCC officials on all levels believed that the Corps could act as a reform mechanism for youth, as well as train enrollees to be industrious, working-class citizens. Social conservation thus had real aims, and Rocky Mountain administrators attempted to reach these objectives through regimentation of enrollee lives, education, and work. They also stressed that the CCC was a rite-of-passage that allowed enrollees, through their interaction with others and the landscape, to become adult men. Both Gorham’s and Steiglitz’s arguments are useful for examining the particulars of social conservation rhetoric. But, viewed through the lens of state and county relief officials as well as Rocky Mountain administration, social conservation was more aligned with Steiglitz’s (and Holland and Hill’s) position that the Corps attempted to produce citizens that would fit within the already existing capitalist economy by providing labor and spending money.

Social conservation tactics, however, had little to do with class mobility. CCC administrators had no faith that the majority of enrollees would go on to become involved in middle-class occupations, as exemplified by the largely vocational education program. Furthermore, there was an assumption that the enrollees were not interested in social mobility, either. For instance, Holland and Hill argued that the enrollee

hopes that the CCC is going to teach him how to work hard and like it. He feels no sense of disgrace in working with his hands. If he has any idea at all about his future work, he wants to drive a truck or operate a machine in a factory. He doesn’t agree that happiness depends on having ‘lots of money,’ and he feels that a man his happiest having to work for his income.<sup>100</sup>

Although the authors’ assessments could have been true and the CCC itself did little to change young men’s outlooks regarding their social position in life, attitudes did change. As chapter

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<sup>98</sup> A. van V. Dunn, “General Report on the Activities of the Emergency Conservation Corps, Season of 1933,” 15 November 1933, Box 28, “Rocky Mountain National Park, Estes Park, Colorado,” “General Correspondence Files, 1918-1954,” RG 79, NARA, Rocky Mountain Region, Denver, Colorado.

<sup>99</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant Gay, “Your Camp,” *Long’s Peak Echo*, Company 3884, Camp NP-4-C, September 1938, p. 7.

<sup>100</sup> Holland and Hill, *Youth in the CCC*, 58.

two will argue, enrollees were introduced to a middle-class ethos through their conservation work in the Park and their socialization into middle-class leisure habits.



## CHAPTER TWO

### CONSERVATION, LEISURE, AND CLASS

I am thankful that we have such a fine place in which we work, namely The Rocky Mountain National Park, it is truly “God’s Paradise,” how fortunate we are when we stop to think that over five hundred and fifty thousand people visited this place and spent large sums of money just to spend their vacations and we are being paid to live and work in this paradise.<sup>101</sup>

--Project Superintendent David Haggerty to enrollees of NP-4-C

Franklin D. Roosevelt would have agreed with historian Kenneth R. Olwig’s assessment that “national parks seem to be as much about national identity as about physical nature.”<sup>102</sup> Olwig, of course, approached the ideological aspects of the parks from an analytic perspective in a contemporary historical work, whereas Roosevelt wholly endorsed the idea that national parklands were uniquely American. That is why he supported Harold Ickes, then head of the Department of Interior, in naming 1934 as “National Parks Year.” During a commemoration speech in August of that year, FDR explained the importance of these landscapes for the American people:

There is nothing so American as our national parks. The scenery and wildlife are native and the fundamental idea behind the parks is native. It is, in brief, that the country belongs to the people; that what it is and what is in the process of making is for the enrichment of the lives of all of us. Thus the parks stand as the outward symbol of this great human principle.

He encouraged the public to take advantage of the egalitarian nature of the parks in their leisure time; he assured them that, unlike parklands in other nations, “they are not for the rich alone. Camping is free, the sanitation is excellent.” He concluded his oration by suggesting that every year be “National Parks Year.”<sup>103</sup> These ideals of the virtues of national parks were no different than those expressed by National Park Service officials; Stephen Mather, the first director of the

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<sup>101</sup> D.W. Haggerty, “What Am I Thankful For?” *Texas Tidbits*, Company 3884, Camp NP-4-C, 26 November 1936.

<sup>102</sup> Kenneth R. Olwig, “Reinventing Common Nature: Yosemite and Mount Rushmore – A Meandering Tale of Double Nature,” in *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), 380.

<sup>103</sup> “The President’s Address on Parks,” reprinted in the *New York Times*, 6 August 1934, p. 3.

park service, and his predecessor Horace Albright both imagined the parks as landscapes that would inspire patriotism in all American citizens.<sup>104</sup>

Rocky Mountain National Park administrators, including those who acted as project superintendents and foremen in the CCC camps, shared Roosevelt's conviction that national parks were democratic spaces. Furthermore, they expressed this belief repeatedly to enrollees working in the Park. In a farewell article to members of Camp NP-4-C, project superintendent D.W. Haggerty reminded enrollees that they were "accomplishing more work for the benefit of all the people of the United States than any other agency," and that "the conservation of Uncle Sam's natural resources is an accomplishment that cannot be estimated in dollars or cents."<sup>105</sup> In another, similar message, a Park official told enrollees that, "The National Parks are the playgrounds of the nation, for the enjoyment of the many, rather than a select few. You should be proud of the work you are doing."<sup>106</sup> These administrators strongly emphasized that the Park was a classless space, one that was open and accessible to all.

Yet it was not. Rocky Mountain was, in reality, accessible only to those who could afford an automobile and had the luxury of vacation time from work. The lower classes, unless local to the area, were largely excluded from the Park and its neighboring resort communities, Grand Lake and particularly Estes Park. This is why Haggerty, the same project superintendent who stressed the democratic aspects of the parklands, reminded the enrollees that they should feel privileged to be living and working in such magnificent environs: "...how fortunate we are when we stop to think that over five hundred and fifty thousand people visited this place and spent large sums of money just to spend their vacations and we are being paid to live and work in this paradise."<sup>107</sup> Haggerty's comment suggests that having money was indeed a prerequisite for recreating among the 14,000-foot peaks of the Park. Although Rocky Mountain charged no entrance fees until 1939 and all of its facilities were free, the surrounding area catered to wealthier tourists and Estes Park, the village closest to the main entrance of the Park, thrived on the dollars of those visitors.

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<sup>104</sup> Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 88.

<sup>105</sup> D.W. Haggerty, "Good-By Boys," *Long's Peak Echo*, Camp NP-4-C, Company 3884, September 1938, p. 6.

<sup>106</sup> Paul E. Stephens, "The Work You Are Doing!" *Long's Peak Echo*, 28 October 1938, p. 5.

<sup>107</sup> D.W. Haggerty, "What Am I Thankful For?" 26 November 1936.

What effect then, if any, did the obvious class divide have on the young lower-class enrollees? Enrollee reaction to their surrounds will be explored in next chapter, but a closer examination of their work in the park suggests that, through constant exposure to middle- and upper-class tastes and leisure pursuits, they were socialized to incorporate a middle-class ethos that combined consumption with recreation. As I will argue, their work focused entirely on “constructing” the Park for middle-class consumption, and enrollees were themselves vicariously affected. Social conservation rhetoric and its implementation attempted to create industrious breadwinners; environmental “conservation” work allowed the young men to participate in values that were then a luxury for working class populations.

More specifically, conservation for scenic purposes arguably began and largely existed even in the twentieth century as an upper-class value. The notion of nature as “moral resource” reached well into the nineteenth century when “Easterners of literary and artistic bents” began to write prose dedicated to the beauties and virtues of wilderness.<sup>108</sup> This growing interest in wilderness paralleled concerns about preserving it for the benefit of people, which the federal government soon became a part of. Men such as John Muir and Frederick Law Olmsted became proponents and designers of what would become the first national park, expressly to promote the healthful and psychic benefits of beautiful environments. Although the National Park Service did not begin until 1916, interest groups in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries formed to lobby for the protection of wilderness landscapes.<sup>109</sup> But, as Roderick Nash makes clear, not everyone shared in this movement to preserve the land. Others groups in society saw value in land for what it yielded economically, whether through crops, minerals, or lumber. Southeastern Colorado counties, for instance, welcomed CCC work that mitigated the affects of drought and overgrazing.<sup>110</sup> But regarding land for recreation use, even in the 1930s, Nash argues that “the masses resented the loss involved in preserving wilderness...”<sup>111</sup>

Although interest in preserving natural landscapes triumphed over business interests in many cases, skeptics of wilderness preservation were prevalent enough for National Park Service

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<sup>108</sup> Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 96. For a more nuanced history of ideas of wilderness and preservation in the United States, see especially chapters three through nine.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 44, 67, 105-107.

<sup>110</sup> Robert Bruce Parham, “The Civilian Conservation Corps in Colorado, 1933-1942,” (master’s thesis, University of Colorado, 1981), 127.

<sup>111</sup> Nash, *Wilderness in the American Mind*, 205.

officials to ensure them that conservation did not impede on economic interests. One nationally released pamphlet on national parks and CCC work assured readers that many species of trees in the national parks, for instance, had “no commercial value.” Furthermore, curtailing hunting rights in the parks was “for the benefit of the hunters, for the wildlife thrives and multiplies under the protection afforded in these breeding places, and eventually there is an overflow from the parks to the adjoining territory.”<sup>112</sup> National CCC administrators felt pressure even to explain to enrollees that conservation work was financially viable; a circular on forestry work in the Corps defines conservation as “the preservation of natural resources for economic uses.”<sup>113</sup> Enrollees may have entered the Corps with wariness toward their work, but officials wanted to make sure and win them over to conservation ethics. Park administrators were hopeful that the “many men engaged in emergency conservation work ... will continue to devote themselves to conservation...”<sup>114</sup> They hoped to inculcate lower class workers with values of conservation in place of land “exploitation, which means the wasteful use of any resource.”<sup>115</sup> In Rocky Mountain, enrollees would learn first hand that nature could be enjoyed simply for its scenic qualities.

Rocky Mountain National Park had its share of opponents from those “pioneers” who failed to understand preserving the wilds for the sake of preservation. Its recent human history, in fact, is largely the story of a struggle between those who wished to create a tourist spot and those who wanted to develop the land for mining, timber, and grazing purposes. The first travelers in the region were Native Americans and although different tribes have been visiting the lands for thousands of years, there is no evidence that any of these peoples made permanent villages in the parks and valleys there.<sup>116</sup> The earliest year-round settlers were white homesteaders in the mid-nineteenth century, beginning with Joel Estes, the eponym of Estes

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<sup>112</sup> Isabelle F. Story, *The National Parks and Emergency Conservation Work* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1936), 8, 18.

<sup>113</sup> “Woodsmanship for the Civilian Conservation Corps,” Contribution from the Forestry Divisions, Civilian Conservation Corps, June 1938, 12, Pamphlet File, Agnes Wright Spring Collection, Archives at University of Colorado at Boulder Libraries.

<sup>114</sup> Story, *The National Parks*, 24.

<sup>115</sup> “Woodsmanship for the Civilian Conservation Corps,” 12.

<sup>116</sup> C.W. Buchholtz, *Rocky Mountain National Park: A History* (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1983), 1-28.

Park. Others slowly moved in to try to profit from hunting, ranching, and mining, as word spread about the region's abundant resources.<sup>117</sup>

Tourists began visiting the region around the same time. Isabella Bird, the English traveler and prolific writer, based her book *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains* on time spent in the area known as Estes Park and the surrounding region.<sup>118</sup> Her stories of the wild scenery and the romantic pioneers who inhabited Estes Park captured the imagination of literate audiences in North America and Europe. Another affluent visitor was Windham Thomas Wyndham-Quin, or the Earl of Dunraven. Dunraven, of Irish nobility, visited the area in the 1870s looking for new hunting grounds. He was captivated by the mountainous region and decided to acquire the whole of Estes Park for personal hunting grounds. Interestingly, the first person to attempt to create a preserve of the land was a nobleman; his private interests, however, were unsuccessful because of the steady stream of homesteaders moving into the region in the late nineteenth century. Tourists also came in larger numbers and increasingly depended upon the locals to feed and shelter them during their trips. Realizing there was more money to be made by catering to vacationers, many ranchers, farmers, and miners gave up their occupations to build and run lodges.<sup>119</sup>

But there was no effort for a wholesale recreational preserve until the twentieth century. The first action to this end came in 1905 when President Theodore Roosevelt extended the Medicine Bow Forest Reserve, then only in Wyoming, to include the northern Colorado Rockies.<sup>120</sup> Although patrolled by U.S. Forest Service rangers, the land remained open for timber industries and grazing. The growing conservation movement and the creation and success of Yosemite, Yellowstone, and other parks, began to inspire residents of the region to envision their environs as an ideal pleasure ground. Many credit Enos A. Mills, a homesteader who lived at the base of Longs Peak, as being the John Muir of Rocky Mountain National Park. In reality, there were others (such as state senators) who championed the creation of a national park, but it is certainly Mills whose passion shone the brightest. Through the efforts of Mills and others, President Woodrow Wilson signed a bill in 1915 that officially designated the area as Rocky Mountain National Park. Two years later, Estes Park was incorporated as a village. Lodges,

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 47-53.

<sup>118</sup> Isabella Bird, *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979).

<sup>119</sup> Buchholtz, *Rocky Mountain National Park*, 68-77.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 114.

restaurants, drugstores, and launders soon opened on Elkhorn Avenue (the only thoroughfare) to cater to the new Park staff and its tourists.<sup>121</sup>

From its inception, Rocky Mountain's tourist base grew. This growth could not have happened without a burgeoning public in search of leisure. More importantly, it could not have occurred without America's growing use of the automobile. After Ford's mass production of the Model T beginning in 1908, middle class Americans began to purchase and rely on automobiles.<sup>122</sup> By the 1920s, used cars were available at even cheaper prices, and consumers had easier access to lines of credit and payment installment plans. In 1929, one in every 4.5 families owned a car.<sup>123</sup> Automobile ownership, however, existed mainly in the upper- and middle-classes; members of the working class continued to exist on the peripheries of mass consumption in general, by choice as well as by continued unemployment and limited financial resources.<sup>124</sup>

And the middle class, with their relatively new opportunity to motor, sought freedom in the open road. Leisure was part and parcel of car ownership; automobiles opened up access to countryside that the railroad, with its focus on connecting commercial cities and towns, bypassed. Early car owners became enthralled with "touring" as a leisure pastime, and this phenomenon eventually took hold of the middle classes as cars became more affordable.<sup>125</sup> Furthermore, by the 1930s, the continued rise of industrialization and stress of the workday world caused many to escape the cities and seek renewal in the great outdoors.<sup>126</sup> And they could, for since the advent of the automobile, enthusiasts and businessmen had fought for the creation of reliable roads and highways. The Roosevelt administration was eager to meet their needs, courtesy of federal road-building programs such as the PWA.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Enos A. Mills, *The Rocky Mountain National Park* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1932), 74.

<sup>122</sup> Thomas Martin McCarthy, "Road to Respect: Americans, Automobiles, and the Environment," Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 2001, 110, 157.

<sup>123</sup> Catherine Gudis, *Buyways: Billboards, Automobiles, and the American Landscape* (New York: Routledge Press, 2004), 44.

<sup>124</sup> Michael Kammen, *American Culture, American Tastes: Social Change and the Twentieth Century* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999), 49; for an example of workers' responses to mass consumerism, see also Chapter 3, "Encountering Mass Culture" in Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 99-158.

<sup>125</sup> McCarthy, "Road to Respect," 121.

<sup>126</sup> Gudis, *Buyways*, 42.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 44-45.

The mass movement of recreation hunters created what historian Catherine Gudis calls a “mobile market” – a new kind of consumer that advertisers could reach beyond the traditional commercial centers and along the sprawling roadways. Although Gudis focuses on tracing the development of outdoor advertising from the early twentieth century through contemporary times, her arguments about the subsequent affects of a new mobile market can be applied to Rocky Mountain National Park – that in the twenties and especially the thirties, market relationships were spreading outward from urban centers as roadways were developed and increasingly taking root in and changing the natural landscape.<sup>128</sup> Mobile markets, in affect, created the small towns of Estes Park and Grand Lake, or at least caused them to flourish. And as advertisers focused on making space and landscape consumable commodities, the Park also shaped itself into the capitalist framework. Administrators saw a clear demand in the rise of tourists entering the Park and using its facilities. The product in question was the landscape and the psychic benefits it held for visitors. Rocky Mountain officials, like those in other western parks, shaped the landscape according to this market.<sup>129</sup>

The growth of automobile tourism and a mobile market was especially relevant for Rocky Mountain National Park because, unlike other major national parks in the West, there were no railroads leading directly to the area. Instead, tourists could access the Park only by departing railheads at lower elevations and driving up formidable canyon roads to the Park entrance. In earlier days of the Park’s existence, F.O. Stanley, a wealthy inventor and Park booster, caravanned visitors to the Park in his Stanley Steamer machine, but this steam-powered automobile failed to take hold as an efficient means of accessing the area.<sup>130</sup> With technological improvements, cars increasingly had the capability to ride the rough roads that led to the Park, and tourism experienced a steady rise in the 1920s. Once Park administrators realized the value of automobile tourism, they set out to make the Park available to those visitors who wanted to view the glorious Rocky Mountains from their windshields. Fall River Road was an early attempt to provide a scenic highway that crossed the continental divide and stunning alpine tundra into the western parklands. This road attracted large numbers of visitors, leading Congress to recognize Rocky Mountain National Park as more than just an afterthought of the

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>129</sup> Sellars, *Preserving Nature*, 89.

<sup>130</sup> Buchholtz, *Rocky Mountain National Park*, 122.

National Park Service by supplying larger monetary appropriations. But, by 1926, Park administrators realized that Fall River Road, which had dangerously narrow switchbacks, was too costly to continue to maintain and upgrade. That year, the Bureau of Public Roads charted a new course for a road that would also traverse the whole of the Park from east to west; this highway, however, would contain much more spectacular views at gentler grades, making tourist travel less dangerous and thus more appealing.<sup>131</sup>

The effort to construct a new roadway resulted in Trail Ridge Road, by far the biggest draw to the Park since the road's opening in 1932. This roadway also marked Rocky Mountain's full induction into a recreation space that catered to a growing mobile market. Contemporary travel literature advertised that the road was "one of the most attractive and impressive of the scenic automobile trips of our continent," and superintendent Edmund Rogers credited it as "the greatest single attraction" of the Park.<sup>132</sup> The spectacular views afforded by Trail Ridge Road gained nationwide fame; the *New York Times*, in an article that chronicled the booming tourism in national parks, noted that the road "is one of the world's highest highways" and that it furnished "breathtaking views, or a snowball fight if desired at Fall River Pass."<sup>133</sup> The road clearly boosted the Park's visibility, and by 1936, the *Estes Park Trail* proudly reported that tourism in Rocky Mountain was surpassing that in bigger parks such as Yellowstone and Yosemite.<sup>134</sup> Historian Kenneth Olwig likened this type of park road to "moving pictures in which streams of asphalt link vantage points along vast skyline drives through naturalized 'wilderness' landscapes that have been cleansed of human dwelling."<sup>135</sup> Like a moving picture, Trail Ridge Road allowed visitors to enter the Park and see its glories in a matter of hours without inconvenience; in short, it allowed for the mass consumption of the landscape. It was successful because it matched expectations of upper- and middle-class ideas of wilderness.

What were middle-class expectations of a vacation to Rocky Mountain National Park? Isabelle Story, a press agent for the CCC, put it bluntly: "for roads, trails, and buildings [to] ... provide a maximum of scenic view, at the same time being as inconspicuous as possible

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<sup>131</sup> Lloyd K. Musselman, *Rocky Mountain National Park, Administrative History, 1915-1965* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Interior, 1971), 82-90.

<sup>132</sup> "Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado" (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1941), 7; Superintendent's Annual Report [hereafter cited as SAR], 1932, 5.

<sup>133</sup> Isabelle F. Story, "National Parks Prepare for Big Season," *New York Times*, 25 April 1938, p. 180.

<sup>134</sup> "Rocky Mountain National Park Most Popular Park 1936," *Estes Park Trail*, 16 October 1936, p. 1.

<sup>135</sup> Olwig, "Reinventing Common Nature," 404.



themselves.”<sup>136</sup> Visitors wanted nothing less than pristine wilderness, unmarred by human presence. Phoebe Cutler notes that this romanticization of nature was not new, but it was a growing trend among middle-class travelers because of the depression and its hardships – people longed for a “pioneer past” when life was perceived to be simpler.<sup>137</sup> Of course, the Park landscape architects’ ability to control and create such pristine views for the tourist gaze drew on the aesthetic principles of earlier landscape designers such as Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., Charles Eliot, and later designers Frank Waugh and Charles Wilhelm. These men had borrowed from eighteenth and nineteenth century English landscaped gardens that featured diverse topography, scenic views, and “natural features such as vegetations, streams, and rock outcroppings.” This type of naturalistic aesthetic valued the use of native material for bridges, culverts, and wooden construction. The American designers also incorporated visual elements from Shingle, Prairie, and Adirondack architectural styles to create a building method known generally as Rustic.<sup>138</sup> Olmsted, one of the best recognized influences on Park design principles, was ingenious in his ability to blend the natural and constructed elements of his projects – so much so that, as Anne Whiston Spirn notes, modern-day viewers of Central Park in New York City or the Biltmore Estate grounds in Asheville, North Carolina, are surprised to learn that these parks are built landscapes.<sup>139</sup>

National park landscape architects in the 1930s aspired to this level of artifice – they aimed for the illusion of complete wilderness. In fact, thanks to government largesse, Park policy in the thirties orbited around creating an easily consumable space of “wilderness” that more and more middle-class vacationers sought in their annual sojourns. Dubbed by historian Richard West Sellars as “façade management,” Park work initiatives focused on the kind of conservation projects that upheld the public’s expected ideas of a wild, mountainous aesthetic – primeval forest, dramatic peaks and valleys, and absolutely no evidence of a human presence beyond necessary Park facilities.<sup>140</sup> It sought to retain an aesthetic appearance of wildness while

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<sup>136</sup> Story, *The National Parks and Emergency Conservation Work*, 16.

<sup>137</sup> Phoebe Cutler, *The Public Landscape of the New Deal* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 57-58.

<sup>138</sup> Linda Flint McClelland, *Building the National Parks* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 18. The roots of park landscape design are too extensive to cover in this thesis; see especially chapters one and two of McClelland.

<sup>139</sup> Anne Whiston Spirn, “Constructing Nature: The Legacy of Frederick Law Olmsted,” in *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), 91.

<sup>140</sup> Sellars, *Preserving Nature*, 4.

continuing to develop the land for increased use. This policy, still called “conservation” by the National Park Service, often had dubious consequences for native ecosystems. Certain scientists did speak out against façade management principles, but their voices were no match for the demands of the mobile market.<sup>141</sup>

The Park used CCC labor to carry out façade management principles (a “natural” space suitable for public expectations) and they advertised it to their visitors. For example, every year of the Civilian Conservation Corps’ existence in Rocky Mountain, the *Estes Park Trail* included a resume of enrollee work in its annual travel guide to the region. *Trail* writers boasted of newly established trails, fish rearing ponds, museum exhibits, and roadside vistas, all built by the CCC. The Park, as well as the Estes Park community that depended on tourism as its lifeblood, wanted to assure visitors that the CCC existed to make the tourists’ Park experience more efficient and comfortable. With updated amenities, such as sewer and water systems in each public campground and more accessible trail routes, visitors could enjoy the outdoors with little inconvenience. They also, as the *Trail* articles noted, had greater options for recreation, including trail routes to previously unseen parklands and new educational and entertainment venues.<sup>142</sup> CCC labor was the driving force behind this effort to “sell” the Park to more vacationers and thus generate more legislative funds and greater capital for the surrounding communities.

Landscape architects and construction engineers, relatively new additions to the Park’s payroll, planned and helped supervise much of the CCC work based on national planning initiatives.<sup>143</sup> The Landscape Division of the National Park Service (later the Branch of Plans and Design) began producing master plans for each park in 1932 that detailed construction of trail systems, roads, buildings, and outlined projects for major and minor development areas. Projects of a larger scale normally had their own drawings and narrative reports to explain the work in detail. Rocky Mountain landscape architects and engineers, sometimes hired especially with emergency conservation funds, then implemented the plans in the Park using CCC labor.

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>142</sup> See, for example, “CCC Workers Have Long List of Achievements in Park,” *Estes Park Trail*, 17 April 1936, p. 16.

<sup>143</sup> For a diagram of these employees’ responsibilities regarding CCC work, see John Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Park Service* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1985), 68.

Master plans were revised every year and updated with construction completions and suggested changes.<sup>144</sup>

Planners, as noted above, used the detailed proposals to employ time-honed aesthetic principles for landscape and building construction. Park Service construction and landscaping methods centered on creating fluidity with the surrounding environment, allowing for only minimal obstruction to the landscape so that the viewing gaze would not be jarred by “the handiwork of man in the face of the work of God.”<sup>145</sup> Using manuals such as Albert Good’s *Park Structures and Facilities* and E.P. Meineke’s *Camp Planning and Camp Reconstruction*, Park designers and engineers made sure that trail and road circulation arteries acquiesced to natural features, that bridges, culverts, fireplaces, and directional signs were made of native materials, and that building construction followed established Park Rustic architectural methods.<sup>146</sup> In short, while allowing for development and thus creating greater accessibility for tourists, the Park Service sought to give the illusion of a truly wild and natural environment. The CCC, with its 200-man camps, enhanced this effort tenfold.

The Park assigned CCC groups to work projects based on their location within the Park. Camps NP-3, NP-7, and NP-12 engaged in work on the western side of the continental divide, and camps NP-1, NP-4, and NP-11 carried out projects in the eastern portion of the Park. Because it was mandatory that enrollees have access to proper food and water supplies, they could not labor on projects in high altitudes or deep within the Park interior. Normally the worksite was relatively accessible from the camp by truck or on foot; in some cases, if the project so required, Park supervisors and enrollees established smaller stub camps closer to the worksite that they equipped with sleeping tents, a mess facility, and medical supplies. Once on any job, problems arose because of inadequate or inefficient work equipment. Although national authorities allocated ECW funds to the Park for equipment purchases, equipment inventories attached to camp inspection reports commonly describe heavy equipment in “fair” and “poor” condition.<sup>147</sup> Lack of proper supervision in camps also proved problematic. In 1935 at Camp

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<sup>144</sup> McClelland, *Building the National Parks*, 300-306.

<sup>145</sup> Grosvenor Atterbury, “Notes on the Architectural and Other Esthetic Problems Involved in the Development of Our Great National Parks,” August and September 1929, 6, National Park Service, Denver Service Center, Technical Information Center; McClelland, *Building the National Parks*, 2-7.

<sup>146</sup> McClelland, *Building the National Parks*, 7.

<sup>147</sup> D.W. Haggerty, “Automotive and Heavy Equipment assigned to Camps NP-4-C, NP-11-C and NP-12-C in Rocky Mountain National Park,” attached to Supplementary Report, Camp NP-4, Company 3884, 1 October 1940,

NP-7, for instance, the superintendent reported “considerable delay” in work projects because of a failure to find adequate supervisory personnel.<sup>148</sup>

No obstacle, however, proved too serious to prevent crews from managing an ambitious work program every period, which lasted six months.<sup>149</sup> CCC work projects in Rocky Mountain can be divided into three broad categories: those that provided greater access and recreation, those that focused on a cultivating a particular aesthetic, and those that provided “protection” for the Park against erosion, fire, and insects. As mentioned above, all jobs sought to manipulate or enhance the natural features of the Park to serve tourist expectations of breathtaking vistas and close encounters with a wild territory. During its nine-year tenure, the CCC work program did not change in any remarkable way, although some of the labor became more skilled as Park technical supervisors introduced new equipment to the jobs. Above all, the work reflects the demands of middle-class tourists and the ability of the Park to meet those expectations.

Providing greater access to the Park’s interior lands and creating more opportunities for recreation were two main features of the CCC work program. As tourists increased, so did the need for new and reconstructed trails, modern campgrounds, and updated Park facilities. Trails in particular were important – as early as 1924, superintendent Roger Toll remarked that Rocky Mountain “is unusually well suited for development as a trail park...”<sup>150</sup> The area already had trails dating back to centuries before when Ute and Arapaho Indians passed through to the western Rockies. In the early days before the national park, the land was already a known resort and recreation space, and guides conducted groups through the forested interiors and upwards towards the snow-laden peaks, thus creating newer trails that the Park would inherit. In 1915, when the Park officially began, there were 128.5 miles of trails. Although funds were limited, Park trail crews managed to increase this number to about 200 by 1932. When the CCC ended its occupancy, there were approximately 300 miles of trails, although regular Park trail crews and Public Works employees constructed some of these. Still, the enrollees were largely the driving force behind creating and reconstructing many popular trails.<sup>151</sup>

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Box 37, “Division of Investigations,” “Camp Inspection Reports, 1933-1942,” Entry 15, RG 35, National Archives II, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>148</sup> SAR, 1935, Rocky Mountain National Park Historical Collection (RMNPHC), p. 1.

<sup>149</sup> Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*, 214. There were nineteen six-month periods in the course of the program’s existence.

<sup>150</sup> SAR, 1924, p. 2.

<sup>151</sup> William C. Ramaley, “Trails and Trailbuilders of RMNP,” n.d., RMNPHC, 61.

The development of hiking trails in the 1930s served to provide vistas of the most grandiose scenery of the Park, allowing visitors to consume the landscape with their camera lenses. In his manual *Landscape Conservation*, meant specifically to guide CCC work, Frank Waugh advised building or rerouting trails around the “main points of scenic value.” He likened trails, in their substantive length, to “themes or motives arranged in ‘paragraphs’”:

For example, if the trail leads up a narrow valley with a pleasant stream in its bed, there will be repeated pictures of the brook which will be the subject of principal interest. The stream supplies the motive to be developed. View after view, picture after picture, will be shown at the most effective points. It is desirable that these views should present considerable diversity.<sup>152</sup>

The objective was to “avoid monotony” by bypassing any part of the landscape deemed too dull for tourists who sought the spectacular. And in Rocky Mountain, the spectacular was hard to avoid. Tourists could meander around peaceful lakes or clamber through boulder fields at soaring altitudes – the Park offered a variety of hikes at every elevation and through all ecosystems, from the wet, grassy fields of the riparian zones to the weather-beaten alpine tundra. CCC crews reconstructed parts of these paths in accordance with Waugh’s aesthetic concerns (excluding those at high altitudes), following the practical aspects of trail building, but always remaining mindful of the picturesque.

Enrollees also worked to bolster the Park’s campgrounds to accommodate the burgeoning number of tourists entering with camping equipment. In the twenties, the Park had five campgrounds: Longs Peak, used by those scaling to the summit; Pineledge, close to Estes Park and used by “campers who to prefer to be near the village;” Endovalley, mainly populated by fisherman; Aspenglen, adjacent to the Fall River; and Glacier Basin, close to the popular Bear Lake. Of these, only the last two had “caretakers” and, by 1933, they proved to be the most popular campgrounds in the Park for incoming tourists.<sup>153</sup> Because of their popularity and antiquated facilities, the enrollees worked chiefly on developing these two campgrounds.

In several of the annual reports, the superintendent assured national administrators that the CCC enrollees and their supervisors completed campground work “in accordance with the recommendations of Dr. Nienicke [sic].”<sup>154</sup> He was referring to E.P. Meinecke’s *Camp Ground*

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<sup>152</sup> Frank A. Waugh, *Landscape Conservation* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Interior, 1933), 10.

<sup>153</sup> SAR, 1930, 15.

<sup>154</sup> SAR, 1933, 6.

*Policy* of 1932, later extended into a longer treatise called *Camp Planning and Camp Reconstruction* in 1934. Meinecke was a plant pathologist and developed his designs in collaboration with the Forest Service, but, in acknowledgment of his innovative campground planning, the National Park Service soon adopted the “Meinecke plan” as well.<sup>155</sup> The basic precepts behind this plan were to reduce the human-inflicted trauma on the native vegetation by carefully ordering campgrounds using one-way roads, centralized automobile parking, and specifically designated camping lots with their own fireplaces and table and bench combinations.<sup>156</sup>

The enrollees gave Aspenglen and Glacier Basin campgrounds a makeover by first taking measures to protect the “natural growth” that surrounded the areas. They did so in 1933 and 1934 with the use of hewn logs and boulders to mark appropriate parking “stubs,” camping spaces, and “strategic areas.”<sup>157</sup> Several years later, in 1936 and 1937, they constructed new brick fireplaces and table and bench combinations, all included in the Meinecke plan to codify campground behavior. The Park also had to begin accommodating the growing numbers of tourists with automobile campers.<sup>158</sup> Using the same design as the car parking lots, enrollees outlined and built “stubs” for the campers that continued to streamline automobile and human traffic. CCC labor also installed new water and sewage facilities in the campgrounds. Apparently, these plans worked; camping population in the Park increased almost every year. In 1938, the last year that the superintendent reported a camping population, the number of campground users had reached almost 40,000.<sup>159</sup> The previous year, E.P. Meinecke visited the Park to inspect the work – no record suggests that he found the results of CCC labor anything other than satisfactory.

Many of the campers in the Park came specifically to fish in the cold lakes and rivers. Although National Park regulations prohibited the hunting of larger mammals, Rocky Mountain and other Parks considered fishing to be fair game.<sup>160</sup> Because sportsfishing meant greater

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<sup>155</sup> McLelland, *Building the National Parks*, 7.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 276-285.

<sup>157</sup> SAR, 1933, 6; SAR, 1934, 5.

<sup>158</sup> SAR, 1937, 10. For a history of automobile trailers and travel in the thirties, see chapter one in Thomas M. Heaney, “‘The Call of the Open Road’: Automobile Travel and Vacations in American Popular Culture, 1935-1960” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Irvine, 2000), 13-66. s

<sup>159</sup> SAR, 1938, 15.

<sup>160</sup> Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 80; Bucholtz, *Rocky Mountain National Park*, 157.

numbers of tourists, the Park put forth great effort to satisfy the recreational interests of these men and women. Park administration implemented a “stocking policy” in 1931 in collaboration with the United States Bureau of Fisheries to fill the waters with various trout species.<sup>161</sup> This partnership is another example of the Park’s determination to treat conservation as a capitalist enterprise; the Bureau of Fisheries was a “commodity-oriented and production-oriented bureau” strongly tied to supporting the interests of the country’s commercial fishing industry and sportsfishermen groups.<sup>162</sup> Furthermore, despite the protest from some ecologists, Park administrators continuously stocked nonnative trout species such as rainbow and Yellowstone cut throat into the rivers and lakes because these fish were popular catches.<sup>163</sup> Disregarding any possible dangers to the native species that might result from the mixing, the Park instead catered to its human users. The marketing strategy worked; at the start of fishing season in 1935, the *Estes Park Trail* reported that license sales were high and local “merchants and hotel and cottage owners are anticipating hundreds of valley sportsmen.”<sup>164</sup>

In the 1930s, the CCC enrollees were the driving force behind this successful fish stocking policy, and their administrators impressed upon them the importance of this work. Robert Rowe, a supervisor for camp NP-4, explained to the enrollees that “in the days B.C. (before conservation),” fishermen were depleting Park waters because their catches were unregulated. Because of the recent stocking policy and CCC manpower, however, this was all to change – the enrollee was to become “Mr. Fisherman’s boy.”<sup>165</sup> Now those coming to the Park to sample the fishing would never leave with an empty bucket, which would increase the popularity of the Park.

The CCC enrollees aided in the Park’s fish stocking efforts by constructing fish rearing ponds. There were four in total; one in Horseshoe Park, one near Camp NP-4-C in Hollowell Park, one above the Endovalley campground, and one near Grand Lake on the western side of the divide. Enrollees first cleared the sites of trees stumps and “forest floor litter” before

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<sup>161</sup> SAR, 1935, 8.

<sup>162</sup> West, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 80.

<sup>163</sup> In 1921, the Ecological Society of America voiced disapproval of allowing any nonnative species in the Park. Also, in Fauna No. 1, the major influential work by biologists regarding National Park Service policy in the thirties, the authors noted the adverse affects of introducing nonnative fish into the parks. Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, 80-81, 123-124; SAR, 1935, 8.

<sup>164</sup> “Tomorrow Signals Opening of Fishing Season,” *Estes Park Trail*, 24 May 1935, p. 1.

<sup>165</sup> Robert Rowe, “Conservation,” *The Estes Sentinel*, Camp NP-4-C, Company 1812, 18 March 1935, p. 1.

building the ponds, which were roughly 210 feet in length, 100 feet in width, and ten feet in depth at the deepest point.<sup>166</sup> Once they excavated a pond, a crew of about thirty-five enrollees constructed a concrete “kettle” over a clay dike to hold water that was piped underground from an intake dam.<sup>167</sup> Once completed, the enrollees collected trout fingerlings from the Estes Park hatchery and deposited them in the retaining ponds.<sup>168</sup> The fry remained there until they grew to legal size; the enrollees then collected them in insulated backpacks and hiked to lakes and rivers to release the trout.<sup>169</sup> Although the process was time-consuming, the retaining ponds left scars on the landscape, and the nonnative trout negatively affected the native ecosystem, the Park was adamant in catering to fishermen, who remained some of its most loyal clientele.

In the winter season, when frigid temperatures slowed the tourist season, administrators focused on developing the interior lands for winter sports. Park officials knew that the region’s annual snowfall and freezing temperatures provided ample opportunity for skiing, skating, sledding, and snowshoe treks, and they wanted to capitalize on the popularity of these activities. The local community of Estes Park, whose tourism industry suffered in the winter months, increased the pressure to create winter sports facilities. Lodges in the Park already catered to winter sports enthusiasts, and local groups used those accommodations for downhill and cross-country skiing trips. Although these groups put pressure on the Park to construct more modern facilities such as a ski-lift, no building development took place until after World War II.<sup>170</sup> In the meantime, the *Estes Park Trail* gave “orchids to the National Park Service” for using enrollee labor to prepare the ski trails for tournaments and meets held in the Park each winter.<sup>171</sup> The enrollee’s, who mostly cleared trails of branches and debris and parked cars at ski recreation areas, allowed for continual access to the interior areas in the winter months.

Besides providing for greater use and development of the Park, the CCC also aided in the Park’s budding educational program. Educational programs developed in response to the Park’s mobile market; they were “a definite outgrowth of the demands of visitors for information as to

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> “Narrative Report, Period Ending October 31, 1935, Camp NP-1-C,” Box 11, “Records of the Branch of Recreation, Land Planning, and State Cooperation,” “Narrative Reports Concerning Abandoned Camps, 1934-1944,” Entry 42, RG 79, NARA II [hereafter cited as narrative reports].

<sup>168</sup> SAR, 1934, 11.

<sup>169</sup> “Narrative Report, Period Ending October 31, 1935, Camp NP-1-C,” narrative reports.

<sup>170</sup> Buchholtz, *Rocky Mountain National Park*, 194.

<sup>171</sup> Editorial, *Estes Park Trail*, 26 February 1937, 4.



the why and wherefore of the interesting and unusual things encountered along the beaten track or out-of-the-way trail.”<sup>172</sup> Dorr Yeager, the Park’s first full-time naturalist, came to Rocky Mountain in 1931 to implement interpretational programs; that same year, the Park constructed a new museum and information building at headquarters, close to Estes Park.<sup>173</sup> In 1932, the superintendent divided activities of the new “educational department” into three categories: public contact (guided hikes and lectures), museum work, and “miscellaneous.”<sup>174</sup> The program continued to grow and by 1935, Yeager was enlisting the aid of enrollees to man the information booths in the museums.<sup>175</sup> By that time, the Park’s museum collections, which consisted of geologic and taxonomic exhibits and Native American artifacts, were growing beyond the holding capabilities of the headquarters museum. In 1933, the Park turned an abandoned shelter cabin that sat atop Trail Ridge Road into an exhibit space, attesting to the growing popularity of automobile tourism in Rocky Mountain.<sup>176</sup> The CCC enrollees later helped expand this museum in 1939 by installing toilets and a water system in a forty-foot extension of the building.<sup>177</sup> On a larger scale, enrollees helped turn Moraine Park Lodge, a beautiful two-story rustic building with a stunning view of a glacially-molded park and its moraines, into what would become the Park’s largest museum. Although public works employees worked on transforming aspects of the main building, the young men of the CCC resingled its roof and built the surrounding parking area, nature trails, and amphitheater. They also skillfully constructed an exhibit for the museum that featured a Native American teepee, dog travois, and willow backrest.<sup>178</sup>

To compliment the growing educational program, the enrollees constructed several amphitheatres in the Park, also based on naturalistic design principles that sought to maximize the illusion of the wilderness. Amphitheatres gained popularity in many of the national and state parks, but as architect Albert Good noted in his manual for CCC constructions, their design was not applicable to all topographies. Only if a particular landscape had an existing “natural half-bowl” would an outdoor theater be particularly desirable; otherwise, construction would leave

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<sup>172</sup> Story, *The National Parks*, 14.

<sup>173</sup> SAR, 1931, 6.

<sup>174</sup> SAR, 1932, 2.

<sup>175</sup> SAR, 1935, 2.

<sup>176</sup> SAR, 1933, 4.

<sup>177</sup> SAR, 1938, 18.

<sup>178</sup> Superintendent’s Monthly Report [hereafter cited as SMR], March, 1935, RMNPHC, 5.

the land “disfigured by a scar” that would outweigh the benefit of the educational arena.<sup>179</sup> He also put strong emphasis on sightlines from theater seating, acoustics, and the importance of harmonizing the manmade construction with the surrounding environment. The Corps constructed all three of Rocky Mountain’s amphitheaters following these guidelines. In plans for the outdoor theater at Aspenglen campground, for instance, designers clearly positioned the site so as not to disturb the encircling pine stands, and also noted that native, mill-cut logs be used for seats in the 200-person space. Similar to the other two amphitheaters, another “informal” 200-seater at Glacier Basin and the spectacular 500-person theater adjacent to Moraine Park Museum, Aspenglen plans contained specific designs for a removable plywood viewing screen and a bonfire pit to provide light (and a true camping experience) to night talks held outdoors.<sup>180</sup> The amphitheaters were popular among tourists; campers and tourists in the Park could attend talks and films on subjects such as “Geologic Oddities,” “Mountaineering in the Rockies,” and “Playing Host to Wild Animals.”<sup>181</sup>

Although CCC efforts to expand accessibility to interior lands and to aid in recreational and educational efforts were always mindful of naturalistic design guidelines, some of their work focused solely on creating a particular aesthetic in the Park. Because of years of human use and misguided Park policies, scars remained on the land that administrators wanted to remove from the views of incoming tourists. Rocky Mountain sought to offer a true wilderness experience, or at least the illusion of one, and CCC crews worked endlessly to carry out these principles of façade management. They did so by obliterating old roads no longer in use, seeding and sodding the cut slopes of newly constructed roads, eradicating nonnative plant species, and landscaping more visible areas of public use.

As the boundaries of the Park expanded with the acquisition of new lands, Park entrance roads changed course. Also, the course of older roads was often diverted to eliminate severe

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<sup>179</sup> Albert H. Good, *Park and Recreation Structures: Part II, Recreational and Cultural Facilities* (Washington D.C.: Department of the Interior, 1938), 198, National Park Service, Denver Service Center, Technical Information Center.

<sup>180</sup> “Campfire and Lecture Circle, Aspenglen Campground, Rocky Mountain National Park,” National Park Service, Branch of Plans and Design, Regional Office, Region II, Drawing RM-2502-A, Denver Service Center, Technical Information Center; “New Campground and Amphitheater Planned,” *Estes Park Trail*, 1 July 1938, p. 2. The enrollees built Moraine Park amphitheater in 1935-1936 and Glacier Basin and Aspenglen theaters in 1938. These amphitheaters are still in use at Rocky Mountain and are some of the most visible remainders of the CCC in the Park.

<sup>181</sup> “Free National Park Naturalist Services,” *Estes Park Trail*, 26 July 1940, p. 7; “Free National Park Services, Rocky Mountain National Park,” *Estes Park Trail*, 11 July 1941, p. 6.

grades and dangerous switchbacks. Park administrators considered the old roads a blight on the landscape and employed CCC crews to alleviate the blemishes. One major project was to obliterate parts of the old Fall River Road, the scenic precursor to the wildly popular Trail Ridge Road. Trail Ridge Road's construction and subsequent opening in 1932 rendered Fall River Road largely obsolete.<sup>182</sup> But, parts of Fall River remained visible and officials agreed that it detracted from tourist views of the stunning landscape from Trail Ridge Road. Crews from NP-7 on the western side of the Park and NP-4 on the eastern side began obliterating the old road in 1935 by removing material from fill-slopes of the road to restore the contour of the landscape as much as possible. Enrollees then haphazardly placed logs on the obliterated area to "make it conform more closely with the surrounding timbered country." They then replanted the area with native grasses and shrubs to complete the transformation.<sup>183</sup> Crews from NP-1 used the same methods to cover up sections of High Drive, an early entrance road into the eastern side of the Park<sup>184</sup>

Enrollees spent many hours collecting seeds of native flora to plant on obliterated roads (to introduce them back into the "natural" scenery) and for landscaping work around employee housing and administrative buildings. While providing erosion control on Bear Lake Road, a path to a popular lake and nature trail, the young men planted aspen, birch, pine, and spruce trees as well as wild sage, juniper, and native grasses to stabilize the cut slopes and cover construction scars.<sup>185</sup> Crews also foraged in the forests for seeds such as penstemon, tar weed, fire weed, Scotch thistle, chokecherry, elderberry, mountain ash, and timothy grass to use in other obliteration and landscaping projects. Beyond small landscaping projects, the enrollees participated in the widescale Park effort of revegetation, starting in 1933.<sup>186</sup> The objective was to replant large areas, such as parts of Aspenglen, which had been traumatized by grazing and logging in previous decades.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>183</sup> "Narrative Report, Camp NP-7-C, Fifth E.C.W. Period," narrative reports.

<sup>184</sup> "Narrative Report for Period Ending September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1934, for Horseshoe Camp NP-1-C, Estes Park, Colorado, in Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado," narrative reports.

<sup>185</sup> "Rocky Mountain National Park, Narrative Report, NP-4-C," "Narrative Report for Period Ending September 30, 1935," narrative reports.

<sup>186</sup> SAR, 1934, 16.

<sup>187</sup> McLelland, *Building the National Parks*, 263. Park administration began range revegetation at Aspenglen in 1930.

Covering bald patches of scarred land was imperative for the Park's aesthetic appearance, but administrators also monitored lower altitude ranges for the sake of populating them with the park visitor's favorite four-legged species: the elk. In the early twentieth century, elk populations became scarce because of unregulated hunting and by 1913, early Park boosters were transplanting additional herds from Yellowstone National Park.<sup>188</sup> After the Park's official formation, Rocky Mountain administrators acted similarly to those of other national parks by expending energy in the twenties to increase "popular" mammals in parklands and to exterminate many of those predators who posed a potential threat to vacationers.<sup>189</sup> Even in the 1930s, the superintendent complained when, despite the presence of authorized trappers outside of Park boundaries, predator populations such as coyote were on the rise.<sup>190</sup> Employees protected and studied elk herds, however, because of their ability to draw crowds. They knew well that their consumers demanded "animal stories, and more animal stories."<sup>191</sup> CCC crews aided in this effort by spending many hours "on important ranges" picking foxtail grass by hand, a species of plant that was proving harmful to the elk herds that grazed upon it. Enrollees also established fenced "quadrants" for the study of range growth and vegetation.<sup>192</sup> Only later, when elk populations swelled and outgrew the available food sources, did administrators curb their policies of extinguishing predators and consciously encouraging elk numbers.<sup>193</sup>

The most tireless efforts to conserve the Park's wild appearance were in CCC protection projects to rid the Park of beetle infestations and to clear the lands of fire hazards. Concerns about the Black Hills beetle, an insect that could wipe out large stands of pine by boring into the bark and laying eggs, began in the 1920s. Lacking funds, however, Park administrators could not focus on combating what they considered a serious menace until CCC appropriations became available. Spraying infested trees with insecticide was one method of eradicating beetles, but normally enrollee crews felled all trees in an infected area. They then stripped the logs of their

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<sup>188</sup> Buchholtz, *Rocky Mountain National Park*, 106, 130; Lloyd K. Musselman, *Rocky Mountain Park, Administrative History, 1915-1965*, 127.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, 157; Sellars, *Preserving Nature*, 24.

<sup>190</sup> SAR, 1936, 4.

<sup>191</sup> Story, *The National Parks*, 18.

<sup>192</sup> "Narrative Report for Period Ending September 30, 1934, Horseshoe Camp NP-1-C," p. 1, narrative reports.

<sup>193</sup> See also Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1949).

bark to expose the beetles and their larva, thus killing the host tree with its parasites.<sup>194</sup> Beetle infestation work was such a large part of enrollee labor that Battell Loomis, an inspector working with enrollees, noted that, in an effort to fight “forest cooties,” his work gang “peeled nearly a thousand trees in that time and cut twelve hundred more.”<sup>195</sup> Loomis was not exaggerating; by 1938, CCC work crews had battled the Black Hills beetle on over 37,315 acres of land.<sup>196</sup> Despite criticism from biologists that the beetle control policy was overzealous and harmful to the surrounding ecosystem, Park Service officials continued the work until CCC resources were discontinued.<sup>197</sup>

Fire was the more serious threat to a beautiful green Park. Administrators was virtually obsessed with eliminating fire hazards in every inch of the Park and streamlining procedures to combat any blaze that might arise from human or natural causes. At that time, the National Park Service borrowed their fire policy from the Forest Service, which scoffed at methods of controlled burning and wholly embraced full fire suppression.<sup>198</sup> In Rocky Mountain, enrollees labored tirelessly to clear forest floors and roadsides of branches and snags, leaving Loomis to humorously remark that workers “joined the CCC with the idea that we were going to plant trees. ‘Plant trees, hell! You’re here to chop ‘em down!’”<sup>199</sup> Crews also built several fire or truck trails, clearing lanes through timber to allow for the speedy arrival of firefighters if a blaze alighted in interior lands. Despite administrators’ preoccupation with aesthetics and against the wishes of some national park advocates who felt this fire suppression tactic to be a destroyer of the forests, they ordered the fire trails constructed without any consideration of the inevitable scars they would leave on the landscape. Furthermore, the cutting of branches and snags without removing the detritus actually added to potential fuel buildup that could ignite a fire. Clearly, the park service’s fear of forest destruction led to overprotection.<sup>200</sup>

The enrollees, like all Park employees, often went through a fire-training program. In 1940, for instance, Park foresters held a “fire school” at camps NP-4 and NP-11. The enrollees

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<sup>194</sup> “Rocky Mountain National Park, Narrative Report, Period Ending October 31, 1935, Camp NP-1-C,” narrative reports.

<sup>195</sup> Battell Loomis, “The Fight for the Forests,” *Liberty* (20 April 1934), 41.

<sup>196</sup> “Work of CCC Great Benefit to Park,” *Estes Park Trail*, 22 April 1938, p. 14.

<sup>197</sup> Sellars, *Preserving Nature*, 131.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>199</sup> Loomis, “The Fight for the Forests,” 40.

<sup>200</sup> Sellars, *Preserving Nature*, 129.

learned fire-fighting techniques of “the ‘progressive’ method, an improved means of fighting forest flames over the ‘one-lick’ system used last year.”<sup>201</sup> Although it is unclear what the “progressive” method actually was, CCC crews were adept at fighting fires when they did arise. In 1939, enrollees fought four different fires in Park and surrounding Forest Service lands. Administrators lauded the young men for their technical acumen and credited the mandatory fire schools for teaching them necessary skills.<sup>202</sup> Interestingly, however, Loomis noted that Park technical supervisors themselves did not always set the best example regarding fire regulations. “Smoking while working in the forest is forbidden;” he explains, “but how to smoke safely in the woods is, very sensibly, taught by all the foremen, acting on their own responsibility. Men will smoke anyway, and it is the hastily hidden cigarette that may smolder and start a fire.”<sup>203</sup>

Park façade management principles remained engrained in Park policy until the environmental movement of the 1960s and 1970s called into question the values of corporate culture that underpinned Park management.<sup>204</sup> Aesthetic concerns no doubt remained because tourism continued to increase in the late 1940s and 1950s. In Rocky Mountain, although automobile visitors declined during the war years, the decades directly after saw another boom in middle-class vacationers looking to experience wilderness. Without the CCC, however, appropriations were scarce and the efficiency of the thirties gave way to ramshackle trails and neglected facilities. CCC manpower and funds allowed the Park to become an easily consumable space – every work project orbited around presenting the viewer with the most spectacular views the Park had to offer. Without the Corps, façade management policies continued, but the result was not as effective.

It would be an oversight to omit the real benefits enrollees gained through their work in the Park. Many of the enrollees, for instance, learned skills on the job through their use of heavy equipment. Often this experience led to work in the outside world; Monroe Smith, an enrollee at Camp NP-4, eventually used his experience stringing telephone lines in the Park to acquire a job at Mountain Bell in Colorado.<sup>205</sup> Dean McMurphy, another CCC veteran who worked in the Park, reported that this trend was widespread: “A lot the boys used the skills they learned ... for

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<sup>201</sup> “Fire School Held at CCC Camps,” *Estes Park Trail*, 3 May 1940, p. 8.

<sup>202</sup> “Fire Fighters Control Flames in Nat’l Park,” *Estes Park Trail*, 16 June 1939, p. 1.

<sup>203</sup> Loomis, “The Fight for the Forests,” 40.

<sup>204</sup> Sellars, *Preserving Nature*, 3.

<sup>205</sup> Jackie Hutchins, “Passage of 44 Years Doesn’t Diminish Fond Memories of Park’s CCC Alumni,” *Estes Park Trail*, 13 September 1985, p. 13.

the rest of their lives – it was the first step on the road to a career.”<sup>206</sup> Furthermore, the young men often connected with their work in meaningful ways. McMurphy obviously took pride in remembering “darn good” table and bench combinations that his crew built for campground use. Smith compared the productivity of his work in the Park with previous fourteen-hour days on a cotton farm “with nothing to show for your work.”<sup>207</sup> Although these are only a few examples of responses to working in the Park, they suggest that some men enjoyed their projects.

But through their work, enrollees were also constantly exposed to middle-class tourists and their leisure habits. They came to know well “conservation” principles of the Park, which created in reality a seemingly wild terrain out of what was essentially a controlled environment. This philosophy of nature, one that valued scenery and looked to the environment as a recreational habitat, was foreign to the lower-class workers who came from farms and industries that valued the land for its ability to yield crops. These young men, who came from “the lower 10 per cent of the population” and who often knew running water and automobiles only as luxuries, were witnessing tourists who had the time, money, and means of travel to spend a week or more recreating in the Park.<sup>208</sup> This daily socialization process was compounded with CCC supervisors who repeatedly tried to “impress upon [the enrollees] the importance of their work ...” and “bring a better understanding of the Service to the men in the camps.” They did this not only with rhetoric about the patriotic nature of Park work, but also by conducting mandatory classes, such as such as “The Landscape Department,” “The Educational Department,” and “Forestry in the Parks,” that focused on conservation principles and Park operations.<sup>209</sup> In light of these forces, enrollees were undoubtedly inculcated into a middle-class ethos that valued leisure-time and consumption, whether of the landscape or the resort towns that catered to the tourists. Chapter three will verify the importance of consumption to enrollees through an exploration of their own newsletters.

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<sup>206</sup> Dan Campbell, “Low Pay and Hard Work Remain as Golden Memories for CCCers,” *Estes Park Trail*, 2 September 1987, p. 7.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Frank Holland and Ernest Hill, *Youth in the CCC* (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1942), 63.

<sup>209</sup> “Memorandum to Park and E.C.W. Officials,” Superintendent’s Monthly Report, June 1935, RMNPHC.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE ENROLLEE EXPERIENCE

Social conservation rhetoric appeared regularly in CCC correspondence with each other, in published literature about the Corps, and in their communications and interactions with enrollees. In light of the ubiquity of the language and its subsequent influence on administrative practices, Eric Gorham's argument that the Corps exemplified the "normalizing potential of a democratic state" on its subjects, in this case young men, carries significant weight. But the real effectiveness of social conservation rested with the enrollees' acceptance and appropriation of its rhetoric. The young men in the Rocky Mountain National Park camps responded differently to the regimented nature of their lives and work in the CCC. Some felt grateful for the opportunity of stable work and a resulting paycheck and thus had no qualms about living in accordance with administrator's demands. Even so, some men did not feel indebted to the Corps, particularly the enrollees who encountered racism, inadequate living accommodations, indifferent supervisors, and unfair treatment. These men reacted in a myriad of ways – some deserted, some acted out and were discharged, others decided to remain and collect their monthly pay. The men did not necessarily allow themselves to become puppets in a larger force of social control. Enrollees did speak out against what they perceived to be mistreatment; the young men in the Park very often relied on protest as a form of voicing dissatisfaction to Army and Park supervisors. Men also expressed their grievances by writing to their camp newsletters. These individuals were not passively obedient in response to Army and Park Service discipline and work schedules – they chose to accept the conditions of the Corps or not.

This chapter uses camp newsletters to explore the multitudinous ways that enrollees responded to their surroundings – the Park and Army administration, their fellow campmates, and the mountainous environment that encircled them. The newsletters, published by enrollees with the aid of camp administration, also highlight issues of gender, race, and class-consciousness. For the most part, the young men held stock in existing social norms, and the camps were colored with prejudice, conflict, and particular perceptions of masculinity. The newspapers, in fact, often served to protect these social hierarchies. Whatever their experiences, enrollees clearly had their own agendas that often collided with that of their administrators'.



There is, however, evidence that suggests that enrollees also shared some beliefs with their supervisors about the transformative nature of the CCC. Despite the variety of experiences and reactions to the CCC, a seemingly collective response emerges when exploring the primary sources – the enrollees valued the stable pay that the Corps provided and used it to create identities as consumers.

The camp newspapers provide insight into the enrollees' experiences, but with some limitations. The Army continuously censored the newsletters and undoubtedly shelved strong opinions critiquing the camps and administration. The enrollees were aware of the censorship, and consequently their contributions to the papers were sometimes scarce. In several additions, editors implored other camp members to submit stories, poems, jokes, and even opinions, assuring the men that if their complaints were reasonable, they would be published. With only a small percentage of the camp roster supplementing material for the newsletters, the papers were in the hands of a few contributing editors from enrollee ranks and Park and Army staff. Although the articles by administrators are telling and do provide glimpses of enrollee experiences, they are largely focused on emphasizing the perceived values of the CCC. Furthermore, the surviving newsletters are not equally representative of all of the camps within Park boundaries. A majority of the surviving issues are from newsletters published by Camp NP-4, a permanent camp that had the longest tenure in the Park. The resulting evidence largely accounts for the experiences of enrollees who lived on the eastern side of the Park near the outlying village of Estes Park. There are few papers from camps NP-3, NP-7, and NP-12, which were closest to the small town of Grand Lake on the western part of the continental divide.

Still, the newsletters served as valuable outlets for enrollee reactions to their surroundings and are substantial enough in number to illustrate a wide array of enrollee experiences. As one young editor noted, "it is the only medium through which the majority may voice its opinion."<sup>210</sup> And despite censorship, some editions managed to include startling critiques of the program and administration, even if only in underhanded implication, as well as highlight a larger self-consciousness on the part of enrollees' regarding their own work and lives in the Park. From the various articles, joke columns, and sports pages, larger themes of enrollee interpersonal relationships, recreational and educational pursuits, and conceptions of the natural environment come to the surface.

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<sup>210</sup> *Long's Peak Views*, Company 1812, Camp NP-4-C, 19 September 1935, p. 2.

Before he was exposed to life in the CCC, a young man had to first make the decision to enroll. As expected, the young men enrolled in the Corps to improve or stabilize their own and their families' financial position. They joined for other reasons, as well – many to acquire vocational training, educational instruction, and a chance to see other parts of the country. But the larger shared objective was to earn money. The men saw the CCC as a way to acquire secured employment and income, even if it meant working under the government's stipulations. With the depressed economy and one out of every four young men out of work, it is hardly surprising that the CCC seemed like a promising solution.<sup>211</sup>

A potential enrollee first had to be between the ages of seventeen and twenty-three, unmarried, willing to allot most of his monthly pay to a family member, and, until 1937, registered on relief rolls.<sup>212</sup> He would then complete an application form from his county relief office, answering questions regarding his physical person, work history, family life, and his father's occupation. After the paperwork was complete, the county relief director interviewed the potential enrollee and took time to stress the lifestyle change that the Corps would bring with its regimented schedules, mandatory uniforms, and expected acquiescence to Army discipline.<sup>213</sup> The county relief director then scrutinized the young man's reaction to this information and his application answers and determined the young man's need for the Corps, as well as his perceived ability to adapt to camp life. If the relief officer selected the young man, he had to then successfully pass a physical examination, where he could be rejected for having "radical physical disabilities" (a phrase subject to interpretation) or not being "physically fit to do an ordinary's day work."<sup>214</sup> If the examiners determined him physically able, he took an oath of enrollment and was inducted into the CCC. The relief director then assigned the enrollee to a Corps company and campsite.

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<sup>211</sup> John Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1967), 3.

<sup>212</sup> Kenneth Holland and Frank Ernest Hill, *Youth in the CCC* (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1942), 41-42; Earl M. Kouns to Directors of County Departments of Public Welfare of Colorado, 7 December 1936, Box 2, Entry 32, "State Procedural Records," RG 35, NARA II, College Park, Maryland [hereafter cited as state relief records]. In 1937, administration extended acceptance into the Corps to young men who were not on relief rolls but in need of financial assistance.

<sup>213</sup> Robert Bruce Parham, "The Civilian Conservation Corps in Colorado, 1933-1942," (master's thesis, University of Colorado, 1981), 36-37.

<sup>214</sup> "Manual for Selecting Enrollees," Colorado State Department of Public Welfare, 1 June 1939, p. 52, state relief records.

Young men assigned to Rocky Mountain often went to an introductory training site before traveling to their ultimate camp destination. When they arrived in the Park, Army and Park supervisors greeted the enrollees and the camp commander normally conducted an orientation welcoming the new men and explaining the rules and guidelines of camp life. Enrollees next collected their commissioned items: “two pairs of shoes, three pairs of pants, two shirts, three changes of underwear, two jackets, overcoat caps, towels, toilet articles, blankets, sheets, cot, mattress, mess equipment, etc.” They then went through a series of inoculations for typhoid fever and smallpox.<sup>215</sup>

Once settled into their camps, enrollees had to adjust to their regimented lives as wards of the Army. Some young men adapted to this type of strict schedule, but many understandably resented it. One enrollee from NP-4 described the early morning scene:

6:00 a.m. Out of the still silent morning comes the shrill blast of the whistle. .... What! Again? ... turns over and tucks in covers. But remembers that little book and pencil the top kick carries around with him on his morning tour through the Barracks – and comes a vision of all those pots and pans up in the kitchen....

Another young man joked that, “having to be whistled at for everything makes dogs of us all.”<sup>216</sup> It was difficult for any enrollee to avoid adherence to the Army’s schedule and administrators warned them that, “if you break a rule you can expect to take the consequences.”<sup>217</sup> “The consequences” often meant an administrative discharge, which disqualified the young man from reenlistment in the CCC as well as any future government position. A few enrollees ultimately decided to abandon the camp even before their life in the Corps had begun. Many left only after a few weeks because of homesickness, something administrators tried to avoid by immediately starting the young men on Park work projects.

Once they began, Park work programs became the focal point of camp life and consumed much of the enrollees’ waking hours. Enrollees approached the work differently; as mentioned in chapter two, some of them took pride in their craftsmanship and productivity on the job. Because much of the labor was never extremely demanding, Battell Loomis, a journalist doubling as an “inspector” for Camp NP-4, observed that the enrollees didn’t “break their hearts over this time-clock business.” Instead, after finishing their work with little difficulty and time

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<sup>215</sup> “Annual Report, 1937,” Colorado State Department of Public Welfare, p. 39, state relief records.

<sup>216</sup> “Whistle!” *The Four and One Times*, Camps NP-4 and NP-1, 4 August 1934.

<sup>217</sup> “Proofs,” *Long’s Peak Joker*, Company 1812, Camp NP-3-C, 6 August 1934.

to spare, the men might begin an impromptu baseball game or track meet at a worksite.<sup>218</sup> Some enrollees, however, thought that administrator's expectations of their workloads were too extreme. A cartoon in the camp newsletter *Long's Peak Joker* depicts an angry official with a spiked club hovering over an enrollee who is obviously laboring to pick weeds. A bird in a nearby tree remarks: "And on Saturday to [sic]. My my."<sup>219</sup>

Although Kenneth Holland and Frank Hill observed in their survey of the CCC that most enrollees "had little experience with organized groups," the young men seemed to have an understanding of the power of collective action.<sup>220</sup> Enrollees, for instance, vocalized their grievances if they felt unfairly treated by administration on the job. An extreme example of this occurred in 1935 when ninety men from NP-4 struck. They protested against what they thought to be mistreatment on the part of CCC administrators who were commanding truck drivers to engage in manual labor when not driving. Negotiations between all groups failed and the Army discharged the drivers. This action exacerbated tensions and the group of strikers marched to the home of camp superintendent George Carlson, where they stood outside and challenged him to present himself. The situation calmed only when Army officers arrived to escort Carlson away from the angry group of enrollees. In this case, the Army issued discharges to all of the enrollees who participated.<sup>221</sup>

Enrollees were more successful when they revolted against aspects of camp life that did not cause disruption of work programs. Opinion about mess food differed, but unsatisfactory conditions could cause enrollees to challenge their Army officers. Some men raved about the "good food," but others grumbled. Camp newsletters are virtually filled with complaints about untrained cooks and dubious culinary practices. One naysayer railed against the food at camp NP-1C, particularly noting the repugnance of having "scrambled pre-mature baby chicks" as daily breakfast.<sup>222</sup> John Finn, an enrollee from NP-1, took direct action in response to a food quandary by petitioning his campmates and writing a letter to Robert Fechner, the director of the CCC. In his letter to Fechner, Finn reported that "the food condition" in NP-1 was "deplorable."

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<sup>218</sup> Battell Loomis, "The Fight For the Forests," *Liberty* (20 April 1934), 40.

<sup>219</sup> *Long's Peak Joker*, 20 December 1934.

<sup>220</sup> Holland and Hill, 68.

<sup>221</sup> Musselman, Lloyd K., *Rocky Mountain National Park, Administrative History, 1915-1965* (Washington D.C.: Office of History and Historic Architecture, 1971), 103; "Ninety CCC Men Given Discharge After Strike," *Estes Park Trail*, 4 October 1935, p.1.

<sup>222</sup> "Ailing Eggs," *The Four and One Times*, 4 August 1934, p. 2.

According to Finn, the mess steward was inexperienced and the food quantity was appallingly scarce. He included the signatures of the rest of the camp to attest to the gravity of the problem.<sup>223</sup> Finn's letter got the attention of the camp officials who quickly made moves to remedy the situation. The Army ultimately discharged Finn, however, on the grounds that he was distributing Communist literature and trying to encourage the enrollees to strike "in order to disrupt morale and discipline."<sup>224</sup> Although they did give way in the face of enrollee demands, officials made an example of Finn to make clear the consequences of large-scale organization in the Corps. This example also illustrates that Army reserve officers, who filled the majority of camp supervisory positions, culled any enrollee who held perceived aberrant beliefs.<sup>225</sup>

To carry out the aims of social conservation, CCC administrators provided for an educational program that revolved around vocational classes and hands-on experience. Although an educational director was assigned to each camp to supervise the program, Park technical officials often oversaw the vocational curriculum.<sup>226</sup> Enrollees obviously saw merit in such a program; these courses were popular with the young men who sought to improve their lot. At NP-4 in 1936, for instance, 130 men enrolled in vocational and job training courses, compared to three who enrolled in academic subjects.<sup>227</sup> This trend reflects a desire to be employed outside of the CCC, but it also illustrates enrollee class-consciousness. J.D. Russel, an enrollee at camp NP-4 in 1935, told fellow campmates that although "Most of us are unskilled laborers ... some of us will be successful." He encouraged others to take advantage of the camp educational program for this reason.<sup>228</sup> Enrollees may have agreed with many CCC administrators who believed that vocational work would be the most practical way of providing "a training that will insure a greater degree of employability...."<sup>229</sup>

Academic courses, however unpopular, were normally available in the camps. At the beginning of an enrollment period, advisors interviewed all incoming enrollees about their

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<sup>223</sup> John Finn to Robert Fechner, 14 July 1939, Box 37, E 115, "Camp Inspection Reports, 1933-1942," RG 35, NARA II [hereafter cited as inspection reports].

<sup>224</sup> Headquarters of the Eighth Corps Area, Fort Sam Houston, Texas, to the Adjutant General, War Department, Washington, DC, 16 August 1939, inspection reports.

<sup>226</sup> John C. Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Park Service, 1933-1942: An Administrative History* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1985), 83-86.

<sup>227</sup> Monthly Supplementary Educational Report, July 1936, Company 2552, NP-4-C, inspection reports.

<sup>228</sup> "To Day," *The Estes Sentinel*, 4 April 1935, p. 2.

<sup>229</sup> Quote from E.H. Menke reprinted in the Colorado State Department of Public Welfare, Annual Report, 1937, p. 40, state relief records.

previous education, home and family life, and personal interests and goals. Based on the interviews, the advisor suggested specific courses within the ongoing educational program, or created new ones based on the needs of the men. Advisors, for example, cited illiteracy among enrollees as one the chief reasons for remedial educational courses. If several enrollees were illiterate or had never finished their elementary education, the advisor created classes for them to learn to read and write or advance beyond the elementary level. These efforts were at times successful, but because the educational programs were voluntary, the results depended on the enrollee. At NP-4 in 1937, for example, the assistant educational advisor created a literacy course only to have “no interest shown by class members.”<sup>230</sup> The high profile of the CCC literacy program doubtless kept some self-conscious enrollees from publicly acknowledging their lack of education by attending. Some men, however, took advantage of the classes. Advisor Glenn Langley reported in 1936 that one illiterate man had “been trained to where he can write his own letters and read a current events paper of about the fourth grade level, practically without error.”<sup>231</sup>

Enrollees who already had some high school or college education could also advance to higher academic levels. Educational programs at the Rocky Mountain camps often included high school coursework in English or literature and mathematics. Men could also take night classes at the local high schools and complete correspondent coursework with various universities. In 1938, for instance, enrollees at NP-4 had the opportunity to take college courses and gain credit from the University of Oklahoma.<sup>232</sup> Completed coursework or high school grade advancement resulted in school credit and often the local county school superintendent issued certificates of achievement to enrollees who graduated from a course.<sup>233</sup>

Like-minded enrollees connected through classroom and leisure activities. Enrollees had the ability to create classes based on interest; there was often a drama or orchestra group, for example. The men also had outlets for socializing amongst themselves and members of the community. On weekends, the Park Service provided trucks to take the men into town for movies and dances in Estes Park or Grand Lake. The camps also hosted dances and social events in their recreation halls to entice the attendance of young women. The local YMCA in Estes

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<sup>230</sup> “Supplement to CCC Ed. Form No. 6,” June 1937, narrative reports.

<sup>231</sup> “Notes on July Monthly Camp Educational Report,” July 1936, inspection reports.

<sup>232</sup> “Educational Work,” included in Camp Inspection Report, 18 April 1938, inspection reports.

<sup>233</sup> Colorado State Department of Public Welfare, Annual Report, 1937, state relief records.

Park was a popular venue for holding enrollee plays and variety shows. The CCC anniversary celebrations held in April were particularly popular among enrollees and the local communities. In 1939, at the sixth anniversary party, camp NP-4 hosted the Rotary Club and other businessmen for lunch, set up work “exhibits” to demonstrate enrollee work in the Park, and held a dinner and dance in the evening with 300 local attendants. According to the *Estes Park Trail*, the event was the “biggest and most successful affair in the history of the local camp....”<sup>234</sup>

Leisure time was critical for the enrollees to escape the watchful eyes of administration and decompress from camp schedules. It was so important to them, in fact, that they aggressively challenged any restraint on their free time. In one such incident in 1934, Army officials momentarily halted trucks from carrying enrollees into Estes Park on the weekend. The young men met to protest the decision, but their actions were “not conducted in an orderly manner” and four of the enrollees were discharged. The enrollee who reported on the incident in the camp newsletter *The Four and One Times* noted that, “it is not anything but fair that the men should be allowed to go to town on week-ends after working hard all week.” He added, however, that protesting must be efficiently organized and communicated to administrators to be effective.<sup>235</sup> Although protesting could be a valuable tool for enrollees to demand redress, Army officers never let their own authority be compromised by enrollee organization. In this case, however, the newsletters aided the young men; the Army again provided trucks soon after complaints surfaced in written form.

Through the various tribulations of camp life and work, the young men undoubtedly found some comfort in their fellow campmates. The CCC acted as an important bonding experience for many enrollees. Daily work and rest cycles meant constant interaction among men of the same barracks or work group. Enrollee relationships were a vital part of CCC experiences; they became strong support networks in the absence of immediate familial ties and provided outlets for grievances of hard work, strict Army and Park administrators, poor mess quality, and inadequate living accommodations. One NP-11-C enrollee expressed this sentiment in a poem:

When to this camp we all came as friendly as a bunch of brothers/  
We ate together, worked together yet we hardly knew each other. We played together in masses/  
We slept together, joked together, together we attended many classes. When one of us was

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<sup>234</sup> “Community Observes Sixth Anniversary of the CCC,” *Estes Park Trail*, 29 April 1939, p.1.

<sup>235</sup> “NP-4-C Enrollees Hold Mass Meeting,” *The Four and One Times*, 18 August 1934, p.1.

stricken with grief, we'd turn to the others/We were brothers. He'd help me and I'd help him.<sup>236</sup>

Through jokes, tales of pranks, and poems like this one, the newsletters reflect that relationships with campmates were defining features of the enrollees' experiences in the Park.

Not all relationships between the men were positive. Although the administration touted objectives of cultivating a greater tolerance in the young men, pervading racial attitudes permeated camp relationships. Unlike camps in other parts of the country that were strictly separated along color lines, CCC camps in Colorado were not officially segregated. This was common practice, as Olen Cole notes, in western and northern states that did not have a large enough African-American population to create separate all-black camps.<sup>237</sup> In the Park, blacks were listed as enrollees only in 1934 and 1935, and these were few in number. Still, black enrollees had a strong presence during these years, particularly in camp NP-4-C. In 1934, eight young black men staged their own minstrel act at the YMCA center in Estes Park, entertaining crowds by capitalizing on a form of parody normally performed by whites. The performers gained recognition in the camp for their comedic and theatrical skills. Another black enrollee used the *Estes Park Trail* as a medium to gain respect by challenging any willing person to a boxing match. Claiming that he was a better fighter than Joe Lewis, Adam Glass attracted the attention of the *Trail* editor, who depicted Glass as having "a heart full of the desire to fight."<sup>238</sup>

Despite the respect that some black enrollees inspired in their fellow enrollees and the surrounding community, racial discrimination was inevitable. It is unclear if enrollee barracks were separated, but Cole suggests that "integrated" camps often contained segregated living spaces.<sup>239</sup> It is clear that attitudes towards blacks in general reflected a belief in and ridicule of stereotypes of black culture. The newsletters are filled with racist jokes depicting blacks as backward and ignorant, as well as reporting the news of whole troupes of young men devoted to performing "vodvil [sic] and minstrel" acts that centered on mocking African-American cultural lifeways. And black enrollees were not the only targets. White enrollees hurled slurs at men whose skin was any shade darker than theirs. An anonymous writer in NP-11 explains that, "We wondered why the 'nigger' section was so named with a man (?) called White in it. But one look

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<sup>236</sup> *The Bay State Sentinel*, Company 2138, Camp NP-11-C, 21 March 1940.

<sup>237</sup> Olen Cole, *The African-American Experience in the Civilian Conservation Corps* (Gainesville: The University Press of Florida, 1999), 20; Parham, "The Civilian Conservation Corps in Colorado," 143.

<sup>238</sup> "Giant Negro Fighter, 'Better than Louis,' Seeks Opponent," *Estes Park Trail*, 2 August 1935, p. 2.

<sup>239</sup> Cole, *The African-American Experience*, 21.



at Zepeto, Instaci, Chiara and Maniatakos soon explained the fitness of that name.”<sup>240</sup> Men from other ethnicities were also targets for racist slang.

Because they made up a large part of CCC enrollees in the state, Spanish-Americans and Mexican immigrants had to withstand racist attitudes from peers, administrators, and the surrounding communities. Chicano men were never officially segregated from white groups.<sup>241</sup> Hostile attitudes towards Chicanos resulted in de facto segregation throughout the state, and this discrimination permeated CCC camps.<sup>242</sup> In some instances, as in the case of Rio Grande County, Colorado, the community balked at the “large majority of Mexicans” (whites normally made no distinction between immigrants and those Chicanos who were native-born) in the nearby camps. CCC state administrators pacified members of the community by segregating the living quarters of the enrollees.

No similar complaints were publicly made in Estes Park or Grand Lake about Chicano enrollees in Rocky Mountain and it is unclear if barracks were segregated. The camp newsletters, however, convey that Spanish-speaking men did have to contend with pervasive racism, not only from white administrators and campmates, but also from other Chicano enrollees. Identifying as “Spaniards,” some men delineated between their culture and that of Mexican immigrants based on ancestry and American citizenship. One enrollee wrote to *The Four and One Times* expressing disgust that he and other Spanish-Americans were being treated like Mexican workers. He claimed that, “We are not Mexicans. Let me tell you If you don’t know or do not understand by Nationality, we are Spaniards and by birth we are ‘American born citizens’ therefore we are Americans and nothing else....” According to this enrollee, Mexican immigrants differed because they refused to be citizens, instead preferring to remain as “Dogs or Hogs from Old Mexico....”<sup>243</sup> This attitude was common in Spanish-American communities throughout Colorado, particularly in the northern part of the state; here the white-controlled,

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<sup>240</sup> *The Bay State Sentinel*, 21 March 1940, p. 9.

<sup>241</sup> Following in the footsteps of historian Sarah Deutsch, I use the term “Chicano” here to refer to native Spanish-Americans and Mexican immigrants. Although it is a controversial term because of its ambivalent etymology, Deutsch points out that it is used today to signify “the common experience of Spanish-speaking, Spanish-heritage, or Spanish-surnamed people.” In other instances I use terms that the men self-identified with. Sarah Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge: Culture, Class, and Gender on an Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest, 1880-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), vii.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid*, 140.

<sup>243</sup> “Letter Box,” *The Four and One Times*, 18 August 1934.

exploitive sugar-beet industry pitted migrant and native Chicanos against each other to compete for wage labor on the farms.<sup>244</sup>

Although Spanish-American men faced discrimination in Rocky Mountain, Mexican enrollees from immigrant families arguably fared worse. Their treatment by other campmates, white and Chicano, became poor enough to warrant a public outcry in their defense. In another letter to *The Four and One Times*, an anonymous writer spelled out the conditions of Mexican workers' lives:

The capitalists are the principle reason for it. They exploited cheap labor and baited many by fake stories. They told many of the good opportunities in this country. They got many of them to come and work for a dollar a day when our workers were getting four and five in the same length of time. Now they tell them to get out as they can no longer be used.<sup>245</sup>

The political consciousness of the passage is striking and its tone of authority suggests that an administrator wrote the article. The writer went on to remind white enrollees that, "...we are all human, so let us act like humans. If you don't like the Mexican boys leave them alone. Don't try to treat them like animals and make their camp life miserable."<sup>246</sup>

One voice, however, did little to stop pervasive racism and discriminatory practices. Although educational advisors promoted English classes for Spanish-speaking men in Rocky Mountain, the administration took no other visible part in attempting to assuage the affects of racism in camp or to help Chicano enrollees adjust to new surroundings. The Chicano men responded many times by deserting. A letter from the Colorado State Department of Public Welfare to Frank W. Persons reports that, "...the greatest number of desertions occurs among the Spanish-speaking boys." Instead of faulting camp administrators, however, the letter concludes that the "nature and temperament of the Spanish-speaking boys" was to blame.<sup>247</sup> In 1939, the state administrators and officials within CCC District Headquarters responded to the "Spanish-American" problem by assigning Chicano men to camps "near communities that would accept

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<sup>244</sup> Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge*, 136. The sugar-beet industry was one of the largest employers of Chicanos in Colorado; it hired 20,000 laborers for the grueling work of harvesting the beet fields. Many Chicanos, beginning in the 1920s, established communities and migrant villages in the northern part of the state to work in this industry. These communities of Spanish-American and Mexican migrants consciously separated their communities.

<sup>245</sup> "Equality," *The Four and One Times*, 4 August 1934, p. 2.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

<sup>247</sup> Earl M. Kouns to Frank W. Persons, 21 October 1940, File folder 6, "Correspondence – Desertion and Complaints, 1935-1942," Container 30252, Records of the State Department of Public Welfare, 1933-1942, Colorado State Archives, Denver.

them.”<sup>248</sup> Without complete company rosters and statistics of Chicano enrollees in Rocky Mountain, it is difficult to assess how this decision affected the camps there. Although it did not prevent Spanish-speaking enrollees from being placed in the Park, their numbers were likely reduced there.<sup>249</sup>

The majority of the men in Rocky Mountain camps identified as white but came from varied ethnic and regional backgrounds. As one enrollee expressed in his poem “Our League of Nations,”

We have Russians; We have Jews; We have good boys, bad are fews.  
We have Irish; We have Warps [sic]; You boys must use the barber shops.  
We have Frenchmen, we have Greeks; We have classes every weeks;  
We have Germans, we have Swedes. We have a mess hall where we feeds.<sup>250</sup>

Although some tension existed between young men from different ethnicities, the extant sources do not convey a serious antagonism between boys who identified as white but were from different regional backgrounds, as was the case in other camps.<sup>251</sup> This does not mean that tensions were completely absent. It is probable that a common race identity eclipsed what could have been regional factionalism, particularly if the men were reacting to the presence of other race populations in the camps.

No enrollee could escape the presence of rivalries, antagonistic encounters, and exclusive cliques, which turned some young men into social outsiders. Many of these problems were tied to social understandings of appropriate masculine behavior. Enrollees had to display physical prowess, either through self-defense, work, or athletics, to gain respect. Boxing, for example, was a popular pastime and made heroes of those who possessed physical force. The Army officers looked the other way and even encouraged displays of power and aggression. Ruben Foos, a veteran of NP-4, recounted one such incident for the *Estes Park Trail* years after the event. He and other enrollees ““sort of took over a tavern”” one night in Granby, a small town on

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<sup>248</sup> Quoted in Parham, “The Civilian Conservation Corps in Colorado,” 142.

<sup>249</sup> Chicano experiences in Colorado CCC camps parallel those in other states. For a detailed study of Chicano experiences in the CCC, see Maria E. Montoya, “The Roots of Economic and Ethnic Divisions in Northern New Mexico: The Case of the Civilian Conservation Corps,” *The Western Historical Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (Spring, 1995), 14-34.

<sup>250</sup> “Our League of Nations,” *The Bay State Sentinel*, 21 March 1940.

<sup>251</sup> For conflict between enrollees from northern and southern states, see Patrick Clancy, “Conserving the Youth: The Civilian Conservation Corps Experience in Shenandoah National Park,” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 105, no. 4 (Autumn, 1997), 439-472.

the western side of the continental divide. A fight erupted between the CCC group and “local Granby toughs” and someone went to inform a nearby Army supervisor. The officer asked how the enrollees were doing in the fight, and when told that they were successfully defending themselves, replied, ““Good, then I won’t have to send down another truckload to help them out.””<sup>252</sup>

The young men also expected each other to possess a strong heterosexuality, exemplified by the somewhat alarming quip, “When the C.C. boys go to town, it isn’t will power a girl needs, it’s won’t power.”<sup>253</sup> The Army did not allow women in the camps, but because they believed “there was never an army yet which behaved like a Sunday school,” medical doctors regularly tested for and treated sexually transmitted diseases.<sup>254</sup> When interaction with local young women did occur, they were often the subject of jokes and stories written in the newsletters. When they had chances to date local young women, the enrollees made sure to do so without losing their “manly characteristics.”<sup>255</sup> The newspapers make it clear that those who deviated from prescribed gender norms would be singled out. The *Long’s Peak Echo* publicly humiliated two enrollees by stealing and reprinting their emotive love letters.<sup>256</sup> Other newsletters mocked specific enrollees for being afraid of women (“We’d like to know why Schlue runs from girls”), laughable dating habits, and hygienic carelessness shown by not bathing or having “eccentric” appearances.<sup>257</sup> In this way, enrollees used the newsletters as their own form of social control, upholding what they thought to be correct male behaviors and attitudes.

The gendered aspects of the CCC camps translated into a specific relationship with the surrounding natural environment: living in the Park environment represented a rite of passage into manhood. In this way, enrollees’ expectations mirrored that of social conservation proponents. Through camp life, for example, the enrollees would become courageous and independent by overcoming their own fears. The heavily wooded areas of the Park represented places of mystery and uncertainty. Fear of the forests was common enough to elicit a section in a nationally distributed CCC pamphlet about the “fancied perils” of woods lore. The article

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<sup>252</sup> Dan Campbell, “Low pay and hard work remain as golden memories for CCCers,” *Estes Park Trail*, 2 September 1983, p. 7.

<sup>253</sup> *Long’s Peak Joker*, 25 January 1935, p. 2.

<sup>254</sup> Loomis, “The CCC Digs In,” *Liberty* (5 May 1934), 46.

<sup>255</sup> *The Hidden Valley Murmurs*, Company 824, Camp NP-1-C, August 1938, p. 7.

<sup>256</sup> “A Bit of Comedy,” *Long’s Peak Echo*, 5 June 1937, p. 6.

<sup>257</sup> *Long’s Peak Echo*, October 1938, p. 8; “Personalities,” *The Four and One Times*, 4 August 1934, p. 3.

featured a drawing of a dragon-like creature with the caption, “THERE AIN’T NO SUCH ANIMAL!” It reassured enrollees that they were “much safer from accident in the wilderness than in towns and cities,” again drawing upon the notion that overcrowded cities equaled pollution, squalor, and vice.<sup>258</sup> Instead of similarly allaying any suspicions that the incoming young men might have, seasoned enrollees in the Park took advantage of their fears and used the forests as a place of baptism into the Corps. In one instance, enrollees commanded that some new arrivals at NP-4 go on “guard duty” at various fire towers in the Park, all of which were located in relatively remote areas. The young men had to stand guard alone well into the night until the older pranksters finally went to fetch them. The new enrollees had to prove themselves by remaining at their posts in spite of the eeriness of the dark forests.<sup>259</sup> Whether this act aided in abating the young men’s wariness of the forests is debatable, but what is clear is that the enrollees expected newcomers to conquer their own fear. While camping at a worksite, Loomis noted that many of the enrollees were afraid of the surrounding woods: “When we heard a cowardly coyote whoopie-larruping the mountain echoes, some of the boys trembled and sweated in their shoes. And when a hoot owl went off suddenly, the roots of their hair prickled.” But, eventually the enrollees conquered these fears and learned “the only thing to fear out here is loss of courage.” Their fearlessness and self-reliance that were products of living in the Park were essential traits of becoming a man.<sup>260</sup>

All of the men went through an initiation by virtue of their exposure to the dramatic scenery and particular weather patterns of the Park. For some incoming enrollees, the Rocky Mountains were just as effective in inspiring intimidation and awe as the introductory speech of the camp commander. Many of the young men who came to the Park were native Coloradoans and were familiar with the towering, rugged peaks. But many also came from outside states such as Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, and Massachusetts, and the landscape was in stark contrast to the endless horizons or rolling hills that they were accustomed to. Some were incredulous and instantly enamored. R.W. Menefee, for instance, agreed with many other CCC enrollees and supervisors in feeling like “the luckiest people in the world in getting the privilege of being sent

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<sup>258</sup> “Woodsmanship for the Civilian Conservation Corps,” Contribution from the Forestry Divisions, Civilian Conservation Corps, June 1938, Pamphlet File, Agnes Wright Spring Collection, Archives, University of Colorado at Boulder Libraries p. 4.

<sup>259</sup> “New Enrollees Risk Lives in Wilderness,” *The Four and One Times*, 4 August 1934, p. 1.

<sup>260</sup> Loomis, “The Fight for the Forests,” 41.

to work in the Rocky Mountain National Park.” According to Menefee, the work was difficult but “it has been nothing but pleasure and admiration in this beautiful scenery that surrounds us.”<sup>261</sup> This example suggests that some enrollees quickly co-opted their administrators’ rhetoric about living and working in a largely middle-class space. In any case, this enrollee and others discovered a newfound appreciation for their magnificent environs.

Other enrollees felt alienated from the craggy, formidable Front Range and its arid climate and severe winters. They complained in the newsletters about the wind and snow, particularly of the inability of their housing structures to shelter them from the elements: “...snow sifted through the cracks and literally covered the barracks including the sleeping occupants.”<sup>262</sup> The severe winters also wreaked havoc on camp water systems and left enrollees with insufficient quantities of water for drinking and bathing. The conditions caused some young men to quit the camps entirely. Camp administrators implored the enrollees not to desert the camps because of the harsh winters. One officer appealed to the enrollees to “make doubly sure that your mind is fully made up before you leave” and be “repaid for the winter months by the delightful weather and beautiful scenery ... during the summer.”<sup>263</sup>

Enrollees, however, did not always silently await their compensation of the mild and resplendent summer months. Instead, they contested the administration’s failure to adequately respond to the winter weather. In May of 1933, the first enrollees came to camp NP-1 only to be hit by a sudden damaging snowstorm. The snowfall was too strong and the cold too bitter for the Army to construct enough tents for the arriving young men, there was a paucity of supplies, and administration had not yet given the near-exposed enrollees their wool uniforms. According to Loomis, the young men “began to riot – they were freezing to death.” Their protests paid off and administration quickly moved them into Moraine Park Lodge, one of the several lodges in the Park still in existence, until the camp construction was complete.<sup>264</sup>

With regard to weather, the human actors in the Park lacked the ability to control nature. But they could conquer it through the swing of their ax. The enrollees’ perceived ability to master nature through their work projects made it a space of transformation. As Loomis

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<sup>261</sup> R.W. Menefee, “Let’s Get Acquainted,” *The Hidden Valley Murmurs*, 28 May 1938, p. 3.

<sup>262</sup> “Camp Four Gets a Touch of the Cyclones,” *Texas Tidbits*, Company 3884, Camp NP-4-C, n.d., p. 2.

<sup>263</sup> “To You That Leave NP-4-C,” *Texas Tidbits*, n.d., p. 2.

<sup>264</sup> Battell Loomis, “With the Green Guard,” *Liberty* (April 29, 1934), 52.

remarked, “Whatever we are doing to the forests, they are teaching us how to save ourselves.”<sup>265</sup> CCC administrators agreed with Loomis that the mountains made men of the enrollees. This initiation occurred by the young men laboring on the very agent of change – the landscape. The men had a specific image of themselves as workers in the Park, no doubt spurred by nationally distributed CCC literature that featured a chiseled, strong male body as the organization’s logo.<sup>266</sup> The young men appropriated this image – a strong masculine body created by physical labor and a rugged lifestyle – and included it in their own expectations of ways that the CCC would transform them. On the cover of one edition of the *Long’s Peak Echo* from Camp NP-4, for instance, the staff “artist” depicted a shirtless, brawny enrollee confidently brandishing an ax after felling a tree.<sup>267</sup> His muscular physique matches the mountainous terrain included behind him. Although the artistry is obviously that of an amateur, the drawing is a clear representation that hard work in the natural setting and the ability to control the elements brought about manly vigor. It seems that officials were correct when reporting the shared enrollee “feeling of power” when their “muscles ripple smoothly as the ax is wielded.”<sup>268</sup> Still today, the enrollee is depicted as a chiseled young man leaning confidently on his ax in the standard “CCC Worker” statues that memorialize CCC sites across the nation.<sup>269</sup>

It is important to understand that the work held significance for the men who were actually doing the majority of it. Not only did the CCC bring a stable income to the enrollees, it represented a liminal stage where the young men gained the appropriate tools and went through the necessary initiations to become an adult male and American citizen. In this way, enrollee expectations closely mirrored that of their administrator’s – they considered that financial independence, job training, and ability to prevail through rugged living conditions in the natural environment as final steps in their journey towards adulthood. Once they left the Corps, they would become full-fledged men with the ability to support themselves and their families.

And of course, this identity as a male breadwinner could not have happened without their monthly paycheck. The government paid the men thirty dollars a month, twenty-five of which went as an allotment to a previously specified family member or dependent. The men kept the

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<sup>265</sup> Battell Loomis, “The Fight For the Forests,” 41.

<sup>266</sup> For an example of this national image of a CCC enrollee, see “Woodsmanship for the Civilian Conservation Corps,” p. 1.

<sup>267</sup> *Long’s Peak Echo*, October 1938, p. 1.

<sup>268</sup> Isabelle F. Story, *The National Parks and Emergency Conservation Work* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1936), 24.

<sup>269</sup> For images of this statue, visit <http://www.cccalumni.org/worker.html>.

other five, although this amount increased as the economy improved in the late thirties and early forties.<sup>270</sup> Not all of the men accepted their monthly pay indiscriminately. They were aware of the government's role in their subsistence. One anonymous enrollee expressed cynically that, "The army and the park service try and see who can work us the most, and Roosevelt sits back in his chair and bets us thirty bucks a month that we can't take it."<sup>271</sup> Others were resentful that their hard-earned pay went to help their parents. Enrollees in the Park could often be heard chanting on the job, "Another day, another dollar. I get the day, my mammy gets the dollar."<sup>272</sup> *The Hidden Valley Murmurs* of Camp NP-1 printed a poem entitled, "Song of the Lazy Farmer" – an ode to slothful parents everywhere who sent their children into the CCC so that they could reap the cash benefits.<sup>273</sup> A young man could not enroll in the Corps without agreeing to allot his paycheck, and so those who complained ultimately did so fruitlessly. Not all men sent their allotment home begrudgingly, however; Monroe Smith of NP-4 remembered that, "all the CCC guys were sincere boys who wanted to get ahead and help their families while they were doing it."<sup>274</sup> Whatever their motives, the goal to "get ahead" was strong enough that enrollees opted to act as a provider for their families back home.

The men were cognizant that their monthly pay, although minimal, allowed them to become consumers. They used this newfound ability to spend money as a kind of leverage for power and recognition in the surrounding communities. One writer reminded the town citizens of Estes Park that, "We should make 'real friends,' as we have to much in common. ... We spend our money with your merchants and in return, have been shown the very best of courtesy and services of which we expect and appreciate."<sup>275</sup> According to this newsletter editor, the enrollees were successful in gaining respect through their role as consumers. Another CCC enrollee,

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<sup>270</sup> "Manual for Selecting Enrollees for Civilian Conservation Corps," Colorado State Department of Public Welfare, 1 June 1939, p. 54, state relief records. In 1939 the payments allotted to the enrollees had increased three dollars.

<sup>271</sup> *Long's Peak Joker*, December 1934.

<sup>272</sup> Lloyd K. Musselman, *Rocky Mountain National Park, Administrative History, 1915-1916* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Interior, 1971), 97. Merlin K. Potts, a Park CCC foreman, recounted this chant for Musselman in an oral interview.

<sup>273</sup> *The Hidden Valley Murmurs*, 28 May 1938, p. 5.

<sup>274</sup> Dan Campbell, "Low Pay and Hard Work Remain as Golden Memories for CCCers," p. 7.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.



quoted in an *Estes Park Trail* editorial, argued similarly that, "...although we have only a small amount to spend, there are 200 of us and the total amounts to quite a bit."<sup>276</sup>

Communities throughout Colorado, and arguably nationwide, welcomed the CCC because of the influx of enrollee dollars.<sup>277</sup> But, aside from their identities as consumers, enrollees did not always receive respect from local citizens. The young men in Rocky Mountain had good reason to assert their influence as consumers in Estes Park. Even though they spent their money in the local community movie theaters, dancehalls, and bars, enrollees were not always welcome there. In the 1934 Park Annual Report, superintendent Edmund Rogers acknowledged that, "there have been several infractions of the ordinance of the Village of Estes Park, by certain members of the C.C.C. camps..."<sup>278</sup> Although it is unclear what crimes actually occurred, the *Estes Park Trail* later advised that when enrollees came to town, "all ladies should cross over to the far side of the street to avoid being insulted."<sup>279</sup> One enrollee admitted that the "soiled reputation" of the CCC was based on "a good deal of noise and petty misbehaviors," but argued that, "any given large group placed together in similar circumstances, will react in the same way." He added that enrollees had to suffer similar abuse from Estes Park citizens because of perceived class differences:

The town flourishes in excellent fashion because of money taken from tourists. With a continuous assurance of such money (God Bless the Mountains) a high toned attitude can be easily afforded. The old fashioned, often remade clothing worn by the [enrollees] is a detriment to such an atmosphere, and judging from the expressions on various faces, gives it a barn yard aroma.<sup>280</sup>

According to this enrollee, the young men were subject to verbal insults because of "station" and "fancied superiority." As a result, fights broke out between groups and town establishments began to ban enrollees. The writer thus advised enrollees to "act a gentleman as nearly as possible" and "ignore sarcastic remarks even though you are capable of tearing the guilty party into two parts."<sup>281</sup> Enrollees did not always heed this counsel; every new company that transferred into the camps had to prove to the surrounding community that they were "good

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<sup>276</sup> Anonymous enrollee quoted in an untitled editorial, *Estes Park Trail*, 4 January 1935, p. 4.

<sup>277</sup> Parham, "The Civilian Conservation Corps in Colorado," 127.

<sup>278</sup> Superintendent's Annual Report, 1934, Rocky Mountain National Park Historical Collection, p.12.

<sup>279</sup> Untitled editorial, *Estes Park Trail*, 9 November 1934, p. 4.

<sup>280</sup> "Truth is Stranger Than Fiction," *The Four and One Times*, 21 July 1934, p. 2.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

citizens in every sense of the word.”<sup>282</sup> This obvious class tension heightened enrollee awareness of the important ability to consume.

While boosting local economies, the men used their monthly payment to enrich their own lives. The ability to buy clothes, candy, magazines, or to save their earnings, introduced the men to middle-class consumer habits. They became accustomed to frequenting the camp canteen to buy necessities and frivolities. The camp stores, they soon learned, catered to their wants as consumers; one newsletter writer reminded enrollees at NP-4 that, “that the merchandise sold in the Exchange is the type of goods you want and wish.”<sup>283</sup> Some enrollees preferred to patronize outside vendors, and all had access to the local movie theater and other recreational venues in Estes Park. The guaranteed income allowed men to tap into current fashion modes and create or expand identities through their consumerism; two enrollees from Camp NP-7 in Grand Lake bought cowboy hats and shirts from a local trading post that were meant to impress girls and their fellow campmates.<sup>284</sup> Another NP-7 enrollee started his own in-camp lending business in order to accumulate extra dividends and increase his “earning power.” He began charging high interest on loans he made to the other men, who used the money for clothing and trips into town.<sup>285</sup> The Army officials, however, frowned upon this kind of entrepreneurial spirit, and they were quick to halt any such operation. Still, enrollees found creative ways to spend their money as well as to create additional income. This newfound ability to not only provide for their families but also enter into a culture of mass consumption was a defining feature of the Civilian Conservation Corps.

It is also important to stress that actual experiences in the CCC did not always measure up to expected ones. Ultimately, enrollee reactions to the CCC were not pre-determined by Army or Park administration. Although forms of social control filtered in through discipline, a relatively strict time schedule, work, and their own camp newspapers, each enrollee was free to reject the constraints of camp life. Many in fact did choose to desert or protest in response to unfair treatment, harsh weather conditions, and exposure to racism or discrimination. Whether or not the individual decided to stay or to leave, to act out or remain complacent, work in the

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<sup>282</sup> Anonymous enrollee quoted in an untitled editorial, *Estes Park Trail*, 4 January 1935, p. 4.

<sup>283</sup> “Your Canteen,” *Long’s Peak Echo*, 22 May 1937, p. 3.

<sup>284</sup> Marvin Marsh, Acting Assistant Adjutant General of Eight Corps Area, to the War Department, Washington D.C., 5 August 1939, inspection reports.

<sup>285</sup> Testimony of Owen L. Desenberg to William F. Boutz, 23 July 1939, inspection reports.

Park cannot be separated from enrollees' lived experiences. The enrollees that did remain gained real benefits from the Corps – work experience, shelter from depressed economic conditions, and a stable income. And it is clear from the sources created by enrollees that, not surprisingly, they valued monthly paycheck highly. They entered the CCC as providers for their families, gained newfound financial freedom as well as a consumer identity, and, coupled with their perceptions of CCC work as a transition into male adulthood, the enrollees were poised to become male breadwinners and consumers in their working lives outside of the Corps.

## CONCLUSION

Many of the enrollees would in some way join the war effort after their time in the Civilian Conservation Corps. When World War II began, some already were working in the defense industry and many were drafted into military service. The War, in fact, served the final blow to the Corps and it was phased out in 1942. The program weakened long before wartime; in 1937, although Roosevelt made the Civilian Conservation Corps a separate agency from other relief programs, he also agreed to major cutbacks in personnel and funding. Efforts to make the CCC a permanent organization failed twice in the next several years, and Roosevelt took away its status as a separate agency when he consolidated all federal relief programs in the Reorganization Act of 1939. Camps and camp personnel suffered losses even before the War took hold.<sup>1</sup>

Even before World War II began, the Roosevelt administration decided to use the Corps for defense training purposes. James McEntee, the CCC director after Robert Fechner's death in 1939, and Army officials enacted a plan in 1940 for training in noncombative skills such as cooking, first aid, demolition, and radio operation.<sup>2</sup> Rocky Mountain National Park, like all other parks, took part in this effort. In 1941 at Camp NP-11, for example, W.P.A. instructors were conducting classes in carpentry, electrical operations, and radio.<sup>3</sup> The *Estes Park Trail* also reported that the Red Cross was conducting first aid classes in the only remaining Park camps, NP-11 on the eastern side and NP-12 near Grand Lake.<sup>4</sup> But, even with proponents arguing that the defense training program was essential for the war effort and homeland safety, Congress voted to dismantle the program in 1942.<sup>5</sup>

Severe shortages in enrollment also plagued the Corps in its later years. Plentiful jobs in the defense industry offered more pay than the CCC. The low pay and strictly supervised nature

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<sup>1</sup> John C. Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps and The National Park Service, 1933-1942* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1985), 23-28.

<sup>2</sup> John A. Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1967), 197.

<sup>3</sup> "CCC Camp Educational Report," 25 January 1941, Box 38, Entry 115, "Division of Investigations," "Camp Inspection Reports, 1933-1942," RG 35, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) II, College Park, Maryland.

<sup>4</sup> "CCC Enrollees Being Trained for Emergency," *Estes Park Trail*, 26 December 1941, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*, 217.

of the Corps was simply no match for new opportunities for labor. Although the CCC had in later years tried to outgrow its role as a relief program and include those not in need of subsistence, it still drew volunteers from the lower classes. It had not been able to “shake off the relief stamp” when Congress ultimately decided the CCC had run its course in 1942.<sup>6</sup> By then, many young men were drafted into the service, which had further reduced enrollment numbers. For the men who did go on to serve in the Armed Forces, the CCC had provided a regimented existence that they would soon relive in training camps. Dean McMurphy recalled his time at NP-4 as “good conditioning for the Army.”<sup>7</sup> Many other CCC veterans shared this sentiment.

Park work programs suffered because of the weakening and subsequent abolishment of the Corps. Park superintendent David Canfield lamented in 1941 that, “due to the booming defense industries, enlistment in the federal armed forces, and improvement of labor conditions in general, camps were not up to full strength, retarding the volume of work accomplished in previous years.”<sup>8</sup> During the war years, the curtailment in manpower was not so easily noticeable because tourism suffered as well. Gas rationing and travel anxieties reduced visitors by sixty-seven percent in 1943 and 1944. After the victories in Japan and Europe, tourism again boomed. Personnel increases and funding, however, did not, and park facilities suffered from over-use and negligent maintenance.<sup>9</sup> Parks across the country experienced similar crises in funding; the problem worsened until, in 1956, the National Park Service enacted its Mission 66 program to reinvigorate the parks system. The plan allotted one billion dollars to parks nationwide, nine million of which went to Rocky Mountain National Park for improvements.<sup>10</sup>

After the war, CCC veterans were arguably a part of the drove of tourists who vacationed in Rocky Mountain National Park. Some had, despite administrator’s expectations, climbed the social ladder to a middle-class existence using the skills they gained in the Corps. Reporting on the abolishment of the CCC in Rocky Mountain, for instance, the *Estes Park Trail* listed the achievements of some of the enrollees who were successful after their time in the Corps:

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 219.

<sup>7</sup> Dan Campbell, “Low Pay and Hard Work Remain as Golden Memories for CCCers,” *Estes Park Trail*, 2 September 1983, p. 7.

<sup>8</sup> Superintendent’s Annual Report, 1941, Rocky Mountain National Park Historical Collection, 14.

<sup>9</sup> C.W. Buchholtz, *Rocky Mountain National Park: A History* (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1983), 193-195.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 202.

“numerous enrollees who received their basic training in Rocky Mountain National Park are now holding responsible positions with the federal government and with private enterprises. Others obtained such training as to enable them to establish their own lines of business in which they have been prospering.”<sup>11</sup> According to the *Trail*, these enrollees had become civil servants and small business owners, a definite move into the middle-class. There are, however, no statistics on enrollee employment after their time in the CCC to make clear conclusions about the changing or static nature of their socioeconomic condition. Obviously some men did manage to acquire better jobs while others returned to farming or working in industry jobs.

What is clear from examining camps in Rocky Mountain is that the CCC, through its implementation of social conservation aims and work programs that focused on creating strong men, introduced the young men to the mindset of a specific type of gendered consumer – that of a provider. Instead of promoting active civic engagement among the men, CCC administrators, based on class assumption, enacted programs that stressed “conforming” citizenship. In short, the men learned that their duty was not to lead but to support – the economy, their family, and themselves – through steady work. Compounded with their own lessons of the importance of earning and spending capital, the young men assumed identities as male breadwinners. I also argue that through their constant interaction with middle-class values through conservation and tourism, they easily co-opted these values of leisure and consumption. Although not all CCC enrollees experienced the same conditions as those in Rocky Mountain, the standardization of administrative practices by the Army and technical services allowed for broad trends in camps all over the country. All enrollees were socialized by social conservation in the same manner. All, even those who did not work in national and state parks, were introduced to values of conservation.

The creation of this new generation of male breadwinners (which was five percent of the total male population) has implications for broader trends of consumption in the twentieth century, particularly in the decades following World War II. As Lizabeth Cohen argued, policymakers and businesses across a broad spectrum of interests united after World War II to create and propagate what she called the “Consumers’ Republic.” In this post-war economy,

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<sup>11</sup> “CCC Activities Will be Missed by Park,” *Estes Park Trail*, 31 July 1942, p. 9. The writers were obviously eulogizing the Corps in its final days, but because Park administrators kept records of enrollees after they left (or at least those who were successfully employed) and supplied the *Trail* with specific information, this resume is most likely accurate.

leaders sought to avoid the pitfalls of unemployment and depression that occurred after World War I by creating an economy firmly planted in mass consumption. This Keynesian economic tactic would, they believed, benefit all by increasing productivity and consumption rates, and thereby increase the overall standard of living. Government administration in the fifties shied away from the blatantly interventionist tactics of New Deal policies, but they still supported the consumer-driven society through legislation such as the GI Bill, modifications of income tax, and supporting banks and private financial institutions in offering mortgage packages with lower interest rates. Furthermore, in popular culture, advertisers ingenuously found new ways to create product markets in the technology drive after World War II.<sup>12</sup>

With the advent of this new postwar economy, Cohen argued that trends in consumption patterns of the 1930s were redistributed along gender and class lines. More specifically, in the 1930s and throughout World War II, women played key roles in consumption and consumer activism. After World War II, however, pursuers of a Consumers' Republic, in an effort to delegitimize the New Deal framework that supported women consumer-activists as well as to usurp consumer policy from a "feminine" ideal, enacted a course of action that put men at the helm of the family economy. Federal policies such as the GI Bill and income tax redistribution catered to men by "disproportionately giving men access to career training, property ownerships, capital, and credit, as well as control over family finances..."<sup>13</sup> Just as women were displaced of their industrial jobs after the war, they were uprooted from their role as primary consumer.<sup>14</sup>

Although Cohen asserted that women in the 1930s had direct access to consumer activism, men were clearly being trained to provide for their future dependents. As Linda Gordon argued, this trend was also apparent in Social Security legislation that created unbalanced dispensation of funds between men and women – legislation that clearly valued the male provider.<sup>15</sup> Like Social Security, the CCC program positioned enrollees as providers from the start, and continued to reinforce that ideal. The program is a direct reflection that social conservation tactics were instilling values that buttressed the economic strategies of future administrations in the Consumers' Republic.

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<sup>12</sup> Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), 111-165.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>15</sup> Linda Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare* (New York: Free Press, 1994).

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