



Building the Monument (Putting America Back to Work)



Public Works Relief Agencies

After Franklin D. Roosevelt took office in 1933, he summoned up the vast resources of the nation to combat the grip of depression in the country. Three public relief agencies created by the president helped build Scotts Bluff National Monument: the Civil Works Administration (CWA), the Public Works Administration (PWA) and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). These programs created a double benefit, they brought young men back to work and helped to protect America's natural resources in state and national parks. FDR introduced the idea for these programs with his first inaugural address on March 21, 1933. He stated, *"The propose for me to create a Civilian Conservation Corps to be used in simple work, not interfering with normal employment, and confining itself to forestry, the prevention of soil erosion, flood control, and similar projects. I call your attention to the fact that this type of work is of definite practical value, not only through the prevention of great financial loss but also a means of creating future national wealth"*. The CWA was authorized to start work at Scotts Bluff National Monument on November 24, 1933. Work done by the enrollees in the three programs continued from December 1933 until April 1939.

Civilian Conservation Corps



Camp #762



Adobe Factory

The official program was opened to men 18 to 25 years of age. The men were mainly 16 to 20 years of age. WWI veterans or older skilled workers were hired to train and protect the unskilled workers. The workers would enlist, get a physical and be transported to an Army training camp for five days of basic training. The term of enlistment was six months and could be renewed three times for a total of two years. They were paid \$30 a month; of that, \$25 was sent home to their family. The men worked five days a week with a daily routine of reveille at 4:30 am to lights out at 8:30 pm. There were approximately 1,643 CCC camps working each year, with a total of 4,500 camps built overall. Locally the camps were at Scotts Bluff, Mitchell, Lake Minatare and the Wildcat Hills. In April 1935, the CCC moved 213 men into camp #762 built in the "badlands" area of the Monument. The CCC continued to work on projects until CCC camp was abandoned on May 31, 1938, and obliterated in April 1939.

Summit Parking Area

The CWA started work on the summit parking area and the first tunnel on December 20, 1933. This was due to the desirability of quickly placing a large force of men to work. Men working on the summit parking lot were obliged to climb the foot trail to work each day, carry hand tools and haul wheelbarrows to the top.



Summit Road



On November 24, 1933, the CWA began construction of the summit road. The road was first referred to as the “Pass-to-Summit” highway. After the excavation of the third tunnel, all excess rock and dirt was removed from the summit road and grading and filling operations were completed so paving could begin. The concrete road was made 18 inches thick with a “buzz strip” in place of a center line. Rock inscriptions of Oregon Trail emigrants were recovered during road construction, which may be viewed in the park museum. The summit road was completed and officially opened on September 19, 1937, at a cost of \$200,265. A reported 550 cars used the road on the first day.

Tunnels

Two tunnels had been dug through the bluff when work started on the third in 1936. The plans for the third tunnel called for two one-way roads with a center wall between the two. This was abandoned due to the softness of the Brule geologic formation. No heavy equipment was used, except for a few trucks to haul dirt and rock away from the tunneling operations. Most work was completed with shovels and picks.



Visitor Center



The first building at Scotts Bluff was the one room Oregon Trail Museum. The Visitor Center was dedicated on July 16, 1936. In 1937 the CCC added two rooms, offices and a comfort station using adobe bricks as the primary building material.

Other Projects

Other projects the CCC were involved in at Scotts Bluff National Monument were: new picnic grounds south of Mitchell Pass, a 3-room residence (right), maintenance buildings, the Saddle Rock Trail and foot tunnel, water system, various roads, planting over 600 trees, erosion control and collecting fossils and prehistoric remains. They also worked on the reconstruction of the graveled highway 86 (later highway 92 and today the Old Oregon Trail).

