

Ocmulgee Mounds

National Park Service
U.S. Department of Interior

Ocmulgee Mounds NHP



The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) 1937-1942



THE CCC IN THE NATIONAL MONUMENT

In December of 1933 Dr. Arthur Kelly arrived at Ocmulgee Old Fields in Macon, Georgia to begin large-scale archaeological excavations with the assistance of over two hundred men from the Civil Works Administration. The excavations were planned to run two months, but were extended again and again; utilizing labor from various Depression era programs including the Works Progress Association (WPA), the Federal Emergency Relief Act (FERA), and the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC). The latter group came on board in 1937 after the site had been declared a National Monument. The National Park Service completed a list of needed development projects including construction of a museum, restoration of archeological features, access roads and parking, tree planting, fence construction, and levee construction, all of which the CCC was to accomplish.

LIFE IN THE CCC

The CCC employed young men between the ages of 17 to 23 years to work throughout the country. They received a monthly salary of \$30.00, \$25.00 of which was allotted for family support and sent home. The CCC was administered through the War Department and the enrollees wore army style uniforms and maintained their camps in military fashion with slightly less emphasis on discipline than the regular army.

Camp NM-4, Company 1426 (re-classed by the National Park Service as NP-5), was established at Ocmulgee National Monument in May 1937 under the direction of Dr. Arthur R. Kelly as Project Superintendent and Gordon R. Willey as Senior Foreman Archeologist. The camp developed rapidly with over 200 youths living in four army-style barracks with accompanying mess halls, kitchen, latrine, educational and recreational halls, and an infirmary, along with a garage

and shops. Life in the camp was not all work, as evidenced by the recreation hall with pool and ping-pong tables, outdoor volleyball and basketball courts, and a softball field. Individual work assignments and training included cooking, serving in the archeological laboratory located in the Macon Auditorium, and later acting as guides for park visitors. However, most of the young men served as laborers in the rehabilitation of the excavation sites and on construction projects.



(CCC CAMP)

WORK ACCOMPLISHED AT THE MONUMENT

The major construction projects included: building the CCC camp, restoring the 1,000-year-old Earth Lodge, beginning work on a 40,000 square foot museum and administration facility (not finished until after World War II), constructing and paving two miles of roads including culverts and curbing, building parking lots, and preparing trails including a bridge

between the museum and Earth Lodge that has become a local landmark.

Additional work at the detached Lamar Site (two miles south of the main site) involved levee constructions along with cleaning up after the excavations. The clean-up, or rehabilitation effort, included the non-dramatic, backbreaking work of

WORK
ACCOMPLISHED
AT THE
MONUMENT
(CONTINUED)

re-filling excavation ditches.

The young men labored in the heat of summer and in the cold of winter. The bleak days of the Depression and the loneliness of family separation were blended into cheerful days and new comradery through necessity and youthful optimism. Concrete was hauled in wheelbarrows, logs were moved by human power, and even stone quarried without modern equipment. At the Earth Lodge, enrollees puddled clay in large pits, mixed in straw, and then applied the mixture to the inner concrete wall to simulate the Indian architecture. The public was admitted to this historic structure on November 11, 1937 after the CCC 'boys' completed the steel walkway and installed electric lights. Park projects continued throughout 1940. A wooden fence was installed around much of the park. At the

entrance, a building resembling the design of old nineteenth century Fort Hawkins was added for the CCC visitor guides. Work continued on a large protective shelter over the Funeral Mound. In 1941 some of the CCC enrollees' duties transferred to nearby Camp Wheeler an infantry training facility.



(CCC MEN AT A QUARRY)

On December 7, 1941 one era ended and another began.

CONCLUSION

By early 1942 only 40% of the original CCC members remained at Ocmulgee National Monument. All emphasis was being placed on the war effort and work ended at the park in February 1942. The last three CCC youth employed at

Ocmulgee were on loan from the Soil Conservation Service, and they provided visitor services. Camp NM-4, Company 1426, was closed at in July 1942. Most of the young men continued in the service of their nation.