



Camp Tulelake



Camp Tulelake March 7, 1940

The Camp

Camp Tulelake was constructed in 1935 to house Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) enrollees. Of the many CCC camps in the local area, Tulelake is the only one still standing.

Construction of the 23-building camp began in June by an advance group composed of a civilian crew, foreman, carpenters, and plumbers. The four remaining buildings include a barracks, the kitchen/mess hall, the garage/storage/shop, and the paint shop.

Nearby CCC Camps

- Camp Lava Beds
- Camp Merrill
- Camp Klamath
- Camp Clear Lake
- Camp Bonanza
- Camp Crater Lake
- Camp Lake of the Woods

Civilian Conservation Corps



Mexican American stone masons - 1936

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was established in 1933 by President Franklin Roosevelt to provide six months to two years employment and vocational training for young men ages 17-28 during the Great Depression. CCC enrollees were paid \$30 a month, \$25 of which was sent home or put into a savings account. The CCC program lasted more than nine years and enrolled a total of more than 2.5 million men nationwide.

Enrollees at Camp Tulelake constructed a duck hospital, administrative headquarters, the supervisor's residences, and a lookout cabin on the bluff behind the Klamath Basin National Wildlife Refuges Visitor Center. Mexican American stone masons constructed over 300 feet of rock walls around the Refuge Headquarters.

Camp Tulelake and the Klamath Reclamation Project

Together Camp Tulelake and Camp Klamath played a large role in the expansion of available land for the Klamath Reclamation Project. They built water control structures of timber and concrete, dug ditches, repaired ten breaks in the canal banks, and increased the Clear Lake reservoir's capacity by about 60,000 acre-feet.

As enrollees left the camp to join the war effort, the camp was closed during the summer of 1942.

Japanese Americans



Japanese American agriculture farm workers.

In March 1943, over 100 men from the Tule Lake War Relocation Center were housed at Camp Tulelake after refusing to answer the War Relocation Authority's controversial loyalty questionnaire. After several months, they were either released back to the Tule Lake Segregation Center or sent to a Department of Justice Internment Camp.

While being housed at the camp, internees completed \$2,500 in repairs to the buildings, including installing new stove pipes, repairing the sewer systems, and repairing or replacing doors and electrical fixtures.

After the Tule Lake War Relocation Center was converted into the Segregation Center, and after a fatal farm accident, internees went on strike protesting poor working conditions and refused to harvest crops that would be sent to other camps. To break the strike, 243 internees were transferred from other war relocation centers to bring in the harvest. Since they were paid higher wages than the Tule Lake prisoners, they were housed at Camp Tulelake for their protection.

Italian & German POWs



German Prisoners of War, hard at work along a canal bank.

With so many local men and women participating in World War II, the town of Tulelake did not have enough hands to bring in the harvest, so the Tulelake Growers Association petitioned the US Government for help.

The federal government replied by sending 150 Italian Prisoners of War in May 1944. The Italian POWs converted the CCC Camp to accommodate the German prisoners that would start arriving from Camp White (near Medford, Oregon) in June.

During World War II, over 425,000 German, Italian, and Japanese POWs were held in 511 camps and branch camps throughout the US. Many of these came from fighting in Europe and North Africa.

The Italian POWs lived in tents in the town of Tulelake while they set up fences, barbed wire, latrines, water lines, guard towers, and search lights around Camp Tulelake.

At its peak in October 1944, the camp housed 800 German POWs who helped plant, tend, and harvest onion and potato crops. Without their help and hard work, local crops would not have been harvested before the harsh winter set in.

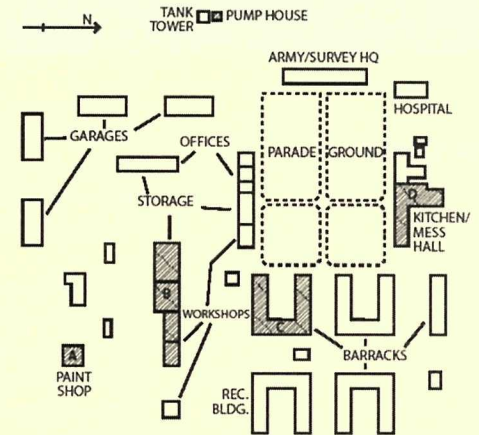
POW's lived and worked in the area until the camp was closed in 1946. Some even applied for the lottery of local homesteads. Even though they qualified to apply as veterans, they weren't lucky enough to have their names drawn.

After the Camp Was Closed

In 1946 the Army transferred the camp back to the US Fish and Wildlife Service. At this time three of the barracks were moved to the Sacramento Wildlife Refuge for staff quarters. One section of the remaining barrack was converted into a muskrat skinning shed. During the 1950's many of the buildings were used for storage, and the mess hall was converted into temporary housing for seasonal US Fish and Wildlife staff.

USFWS Pacific Region Sign Shop

Located inside the north end of the remaining barrack, the Regional Sign Shop produced signs for all wildlife refuges in California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Nevada and Hawaii. Sign production started in May 1960 and continued until it closed in December 1974. During its operation the sign shop produced over 6,000 wood, metal, and colored signs.



Remaining buildings are shaded on this simplified diagram of the original CCC layout.

Restoration Projects

Starting in 2006, the Klamath Basin Wildlife Refuge Association (KBWRA) received a "Preserve America" grant to begin stabilizing one portion of the barrack. With the help of local volunteers donating over 800 hours the KBWRA was able to re-level approximately 4,000 square feet of the floor, and replaced the deteriorated wood shingle roof with a temporary protective sheet metal roof.

In an effort to restore the building to its original look, four windows were reinstalled to their original locations,

a stone fire chimney was removed, and non-original interior walls were removed.

During the spring and summer of 2009, the Klamath Basin Wildlife Refuge Association replaced the flooring in the north wing of the barracks.

Since the completion of work funded by the grant. The National Park Service began additional restoration work at Camp Tulelake. Ask at the visitor center to learn more about current and possible future work that will be done at the site.



Camp Tulelake barrack prior to the start of restoration work



Camp Tulelake barrack during restoration work