THE CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS FROM THE MEADOWLANDS TO BEAR MOUNTAIN: AN EVALUATION OF RACE, GENDER, AND LABOR IN THE NEW DEAL'S EFFORT TO EMPLOY AMERICA AND PLANT TREES

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Advisor: Dr. William B. Rogers

Leah Jerome

Drew University

Madison, New Jersey

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Abstract

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Doctor of Letters Dissertation by

Leah Jerome

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This dissertation explores the topic of the *Civilian Conservation Corps* (CCC) and how it operated in camps that existed in Bergen County and in Bear Mountain. To contribute deeper insights to the academic discourse on the New Deal's conservation agency, this study analyzes three camp locations to gain a better understanding of the individuals they employed, with a specific focus on race and gender. This dissertation asserts that the CCC represented a major change in how the government responded to its people during a crisis. The CCC employed millions of men, prepared the country for an army, conserved the natural landscape, and instilled in its young workers a sense of patriotism. However, like much of the New Deal regarding race and gender, there was no great social change. This is reflected in how the CCC operated from Bergen County to Bear Mountain. The CCC maintained its segregated units in Teterboro, and women were not allowed to participate in the CCC in Bear Mountain. They formed a camp only for women and without a conservation initiative.

Included in this dissertation are firsthand accounts of the CCC camps in Teterboro, the Palisades, and at the female camp (modeled after the idea of the CCC) at Lake Tiorati in Bear Mountain. Among the archives consulted for this evaluation were

the National Archives at the University of Maryland and the FDR Presidential Library. Camp inspection reports and camp newspapers offered some of the most remarkable insights into camp life and enrollee experiences. The personal accounts of CCC enrollee Peter Jacullo, shared before his passing in 2023, helped to tell the story of life working for the CCC at the Palisades.

The story of racial and gender equality is ever-evolving in this country. The research done for this dissertation reveals that, while the CCC was not an overhaul of these norms, small moments, as seen from Teterboro to Bear Mountain, are not insignificant in the broader struggle for change in this country.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Lou and Judy Jerome. Without their unwavering support throughout my academic journey, this accomplishment, and those along the way, would not have been possible. Their belief in my abilities, encouragement in my growth, and genuine interest in my studies have made this otherwise solitary journey a shared one.

To my grandparents, Anthony and Loretta Pesciotta and Ralph and Fran Jerome, I am endlessly grateful for the values they instilled in me. They lived through the hardship of the Great Depression, persevered, and instilled in their children and grandchildren the values of hard work, gratitude, education, and family. Their memory continues to be a guiding light for me and an inspiration for my love and appreciation of history.

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I would like to thank Kathleen Duxbury, who has an unrivaled passion for studying the CCC in Bergen County. Her book *The Boys of Bergen* inspired me to continue to explore intricate details of the CCC. She directed me, encouraged me, and supported me throughout this project. I will forever be grateful that Kathleen introduced me to Peter Jacullo. I am grateful to Peter Jacullo and his family for opening their home to me and taking the time to pass on the stories of the CCC to a stranger.

For a decade, I have felt intellectually nurtured, challenged, and inspired by the Drew University Caspersen School of Graduate Studies community. The professors I learned from along the way have contributed to my academic growth.

My immediate support system is owed a profound thank you. To my parents, Lou and Judy, and my siblings, Kristin and Ralph, thank you for always being in my corner.

Chapter One

Introduction

Amid the Great Depression, the New Deal was a turning point in the relationship between the American people and their government. It defined the relationship as one in which the government was instrumental in contributing to the welfare of the American people. While the *Civilian Conservation Corps* (CCC) was only one of many agencies which the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration created, it left an indelible mark on the nation's landscape. The ubiquity of New Deal programs is less familiar to people other than the historians who study it; however, the New Deal is present in our banking system, stock market, housing, public works, labor rights, and environment. The objective of this project is to assess the *Civilian Conservation Corps* in Bergen County for the purpose of identifying the role the agency played in one region in which it operated. The CCC was an agency with over 4,500 locations nationwide. However, by focusing on three camp locations from the Meadowlands of New Jersey to Bear Mountain, New York, this project examines the mobilization and work done within each camp through the lens of race and gender. The Bear Mountain camp was a female version of the CCC but was technically not part of the agency. The Meadowlands campsite was initially for a segregated unit of only Black workers in contrast to the all white CCC camp of the Palisades. Through analysis, much will be revealed about racial and gender issues within these camps. This project will evaluate the ways in which the CCC reflected American liberalism in the 1930s. It is the contention of this study that the CCC was progressive in some regards yet was still restrained by conventional understandings of race and gender. The creation of the CCC did not lead to an overhaul of racial and gender norms; the status quo of

segregation and the focus on male unemployment relief persisted. Nevertheless, there were moments of progress within the camps' existence, as seen from the Meadowlands to Bear Mountain. These moments collectively become part of the long national narrative of progressive change.

This dissertation will analyze the all-female Camp Tera in Bear Mountain, two white male camps in the Palisades, and two Black and one white camp in the Meadowlands. The spring of 2023 marked the 90th anniversary of the New Deal, which begs a question: what role does the New Deal still play in the lives of Americans nine decades later? The physical impact of the CCC across America is visible in parks, erosion control, forests, and other conservation projects. Of the camps being assessed for this study, only the Palisades camp has left behind any physical markers of the CCC. The female camp did not offer women the opportunity to engage in conservation because such outdoor work was considered less suitable for their gender. The Teterboro camp, located next to the town of Hasbrouck Heights, focused on mosquito control, but the long-term results of their efforts are no longer visible.

Beyond the work done at each camp, an evaluation of each of them offers a view into the 1930s. From Teterboro to Bear Mountain, the CCC addressed the needs of conservation and unemployment relief. In the process, the CCC offered physical benefits, educational outlets, and transferable skills to young adults. The legacy of the CCC is revealed through the contributions of the young men who labored: their physical growth and edification, their preparedness for war, and their future contributions to conservation initiatives. As will be seen, while the benefits were notable, the CCC was restricted by the confines of the societal norms of the 1930s, specifically regarding gender and race.

The topic of this study is significant because it evaluates leadership during the crisis of the Great Depression, not dissimilar to what America recently experienced in the global pandemic. The Great Depression and the presidency of Franklin Roosevelt saw the nation collectively adopt the New Deal as a response to the crisis. What can be learned from one era about the response to a crisis that might offer insights and lessons into a different crisis in a different era? The further away society moves from the New Deal the more it is forgotten, even though our lives are still affected by it and lessons can be learned from it.

Before delving into each camp, it is important to evaluate the New Deal within the broader context of the Great Depression. During this crisis, the institutions of democracy and capitalism were questioned and challenged around the world. Roosevelt had the herculean task of responding in a way that not only preserved these institutions but also expanded the role of government in addressing the nation's challenges. He was able to strike a balance by taking actions that limited the orthodox laissez-faire approach of government and initiated an active relationship between the federal government and the people, while still preserving capitalism and democracy. However unconventional the New Deal was, many traditional social beliefs were not challenged in its creation. This dissertation will examine the CCC for what it represented: a repudiation of Herbert Hoover's approach to the Great Depression, yet the continuation of conservative views on race and gender. Focusing on several case studies offers a micro-level evaluation of several communities. While much has been written about the CCC on a national level, each camp has its own story worth exploring.

Much scholarship exists on the CCC; however, the unique element of this dissertation is that it specifically examines race and gender in three specific camp locations. The best local historical research on the Bergen County camps was done by Kathleen Duxbury. Kathleen is the daughter of a CCC worker and has worked for years to research and understand the CCC, particularly focusing on local history. Her book, *The Boys of Bergen* (2012), has been of great benefit and interest to this study. She touches on the backlash against the all-Black enrollees at the Meadowlands camp which this project further analyzes. Duxbury's book does a masterful job of explaining how the camps operated, the type of work they did, and the experiences of workers. Going beyond her study, this dissertation explores more deeply what the backlash against the all-Black camp can tell a twenty-first century historian about race relations in general in Bergen County in the 1930s. Local history books say very little, if anything, about the very active KKK in Bergen County, including its cross burnings and resistance to Black people moving into the communities. The resistance to allowing an all-Black camp to exist in Bergen County is part of a larger picture of a county that sought racial homogeneity and has buried its racist historical past in a place where few will find it. To ignore this part of our local history is to deny some of the true racial scars that marred its past. This paper confronts these truths.

Many resources and texts were consulted and referenced when researching this dissertation. The most prominent historian of the CCC is John A. Salmond, author of *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study* (1967). He also wrote an article entitled "The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Negro," published in *The Journal of American History* in 1965. These texts provide necessary context that is

included in this study. The primary text on the Palisades is by Robert Binnewies called *Palisades: The People's Park* (2021). For details on Camp Tera, important texts include Thomas W. Patton, "What Of Her? Eleanor Roosevelt and Camp Tera" (2006), which cites many primary sources that were also researched throughout this study. Joyce Kornbluh's article, "Labor Education and Women Workers: An Historical Perspective*"* (1981), offers significant information on unemployed women during the Great Depression. An important text on women during the Great Depression is *Beyond Suffrage: Women in the New Deal* (1981) by Susan Ware. Regarding the general history of the New Deal, *The Coming of the New Deal, 1933-1935* (1959) by Arthur Schlesinger is a quintessential text. In addition to this text, another in-depth look at the CCC comes from NJIT historian Neil M. Maher, entitled *Nature's New Deal* (2009). Additional inspiration for this study comes from Eric Rauchway's book, *Why the New Deal Matters* (2021), which approaches the New Deal as a moment in American history that sought to address not only the financial crisis of the Great Depression but also the role it played in shaping American society and preserving American democracy.

The foundation of this paper is a historical analysis. Woven into this context is a study and analysis of race and gender issues regarding the CCC camps and the communities they inhabited. This project considers the government's responses to unemployment, requiring an understanding of the government's economic policy and approach to the problem. This dissertation is interdisciplinary as it incorporates gender studies, racial studies, national history, local history, and economics. Because this study will be evaluating people within a time period, there is an element of sociology incorporated into the project as well.

This paper is broken down into chapters focusing on each region of interest. Chapter Two, "The Origins of the *Civilian Conservation Corps*," offers an overview of the *Civilian Conservation Corps*, its roots, origins, and early mobilization. It evaluates Roosevelt's efforts in creating the agency as one of his first responses to the Great Depression. This chapter also includes an overview of some of the early debates regarding the agency, the people responsible for its creation, and the role of the director, Robert Fechner. Succeeding chapters explore the three locations central to this study. It begins geographically in the Meadowlands and then moves north to the Palisades, and then ends in Bear Mountain.

This dissertation evaluates the origins of Franklin Roosevelt's conservation inspiration from his upbringing in Hyde Park, NY, to the mobilization of conservation initiatives during the Progressive Era. This dissertation goes on to explore the introduction of a segregated all-Black camp in Bergen County in Chapter Three, "The CCC in Teterboro." It examines the formation of the camp, the work done by the campers, and camp reports; it then focuses on the role of race in the camp, specifically the backlash against Black workers living in a predominantly white community. This chapter delves into the dissolution of the camp and the creation of an all-white camp before the return of another all-Black camp in the final phase of the camp's existence. The all-white camp represents the body politic of the New Deal, the intended recipient of the majority of the unemployment work programs. When analyzing the camps that employed white men in Teterboro and the Palisades, the focus will be the type of jobs the men were doing. "The CCC in the New Jersey Palisades," will be the title of Chapter Four and it will focus solely on the CCC in the Palisades. Chapter Five, entitled "The

Women of Camp Tera," will transition into a focus primarily on gender. This camp was uncharacteristic of other New Deal programs in that it was racially integrated. The concluding chapter will summarize key takeaways from this study regarding race, gender, and the CCC.

The approach of this study is based on the exploration of primary sources, particularly historical newspapers. These sources reflect how the CCC was perceived by the greater community. Local newspaper publications like *The Bergen Record* and nationally renowned newspapers like the *New York Times*, in addition to the newspapers written by each camp offer a glimpse into the camps at the time in which they existed. *The Mosquito Dispatch*, the Palisades newspapers under various names, and *Tera Topics* were all significant sources that provided valuable insights. A major component of this dissertation was the utilization of archives. The National Archives, The FDR Presidential Library, and the Palisades Interstate Park Commission Archives, all offered valuable resources that were incorporated into this paper. Through the course of this study, in addition to Drew University, several other universities offered access to various materials that aided in telling this story. Rutgers University's *Bernard Bush collection on the Ku Klux Klan in New Jersey*, and Bryn Mawr College's *Hilda Worthington Smith Collection* contained key resources that were consulted for this dissertation.

Hearing the voice of an actual CCC worker was the most ideal source of information used for this study. In September of 2022, Peter Jacullo, a CCC worker from the Palisades camp, offered an interview about his life and experiences working in the CCC. At the age of 104, he might have been the longest living CCC worker in Bergen

County. His testimony offers a unique perspective on what it was like to work for the CCC, building the Palisades.

This project is an acknowledgment of the 90th anniversary of the New Deal with a zoomed-in look at the CCC in one region. The agency was a success in my regards but also had shortcomings. By offering a case study of the CCC camps and its female counterpart in one region, this paper confronts the topics of race and gender and allows its readers to hear from the men and women who participated in them and left behind a legacy as being part of the New Deal.

Chapter Two

The Origins of The *Civilian Conservation Corps*

By 1942 the men of the United States were preparing for the greatest military conflict in world history. The attack on Pearl Harbor finally prompted the American entrance into the war and, in doing so, turned the nation's attention from domestic economic woes to grave dangers abroad. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt had already assumed his role as commander in chief when he *waged a war* on the Great Depression; this was the language he used in his First Inaugural Address on March 4, 1933. The American Army of 1942 would follow its leader into combat in theaters in Europe and the Pacific as so many had followed him into the labor force through the jobs created in the New Deal. Chief among those agencies of public works was the C*ivilian Conservation Corps*. The creation of the *Civilian Conservation Corps* in the *First One Hundred Days* of the Franklin Roosevelt presidency demonstrates its paramount importance to the new president.[1] Conservation, however, was not a new concept in the United States, nor was it a new concept to the president. The CCC and Franklin Roosevelt must be viewed in a twofold context: his upbringing in Hyde Park, NY, and the influence of the Progressive Era's conservation movement and political climate on his outlook as a reformer and conservationist.

[1] The *First One Hundred Days* began upon FDR's inauguration when he called a three month long special session of Congress to enact legislation to combat the Great Depression. Fifteen major bills were created and the foundation of the New Deal was established. On the 100th day, in a radio address, FDR reflected on the "first 100 days." It has subsequently become a benchmark to identify the early direction of the new presidential administration.

Upbringing and Early Influences:

Roosevelt's attachment to his Hyde Park home was where his interest in conservation was born. When he joined his mother Sara in managing his family estate in 1910, he observed the overuse of the farmland over the decades and hoped to replenish the land with fresh and renewed growth. This was a microcosm of his vision for the nation. Reforestation became a personal passion that would be brought with him into public office. Regarding his home estate, Roosevelt lamented about a land that had formerly grown prized corn: "I can lime it, cross-plough it, manure it and treat it with every art known to science, but it has just plain run out-and now I am putting it into trees in the hope that my great-grandchildren will be able to try raising corn again- just one century from now."[2] As quoted by Arthur Schlesinger in his 1959 book *The Coming of the New Deal*, Roosevelt once said, "The forests are the 'lungs' of our land, purifying our air and giving fresh strength to our people."[3] His interest in forestry was part of his upbringing in the countryside of upstate New York, home to the Catskill and the Adirondack Mountains. He would go on rides around the family estate with his father, James Roosevelt, observing the trees and the natural surroundings. Schlesinger notes that Roosevelt planted "twenty to fifty thousand trees a year on the estate."[4] His interest in tree growing was so central to his identity that when he cast his vote in the 1944 presidential election, he listed his occupation as "tree grower," as stated in the *Dunkirk*

[2] Arthur Schlesinger, *The Coming of the New Deal* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1959), 335-336.

[3] Schlesinger, *The Coming*, 336.

[4] Schlesinger, *The Coming*, 336.

Evening Observer newspaper.[5] According to Thomas Patton, a forester and historian, Roosevelt had a very strong attachment to Hyde Park and the conservation of its landscape both aesthetically and regarding its practical use.[6] Patton documents extensively that Roosevelt addressed forestry during nearly every phase of his political career, from his role in the New York State Senate to the governorship and then to the American presidency.

Progressive Era Influences:

In addition to Roosevelt's childhood influence of the picturesque woods of his upstate New York upbringing, he was a young man and budding politician when the country was engaged in one of its greatest moments of reform: The Progressive Era. His distant relative, Teddy Roosevelt, made conservation a tenant of his presidency. Teddy's *Square Deal* platform of domestic reform sought corporate control, consumer protection, and conservation. He became one of the country's most prominent early conservationists as Progressive reformers spoke out in opposition to the misuse of the land in an ever-industrializing country.

Decades later, the New Deal evolved out of the Progressive Era through the ideas that it represented and the people who directed it. Franklin Roosevelt was influenced by the Progressive Era and aligned himself with the conservationist ideals of Gifford Pinchot, Teddy Roosevelt's appointed Chief of the United States Forest Service. Within the Progressive Era, there were two primary schools of thought regarding the

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[5] "President Roosevelt Voted for Himself For Fourth Time," *Dunkirk Evening Observer* (Dunkirk, NY), November 7, 1944.

[6] Thomas W. Patton, "Forestry and Politics: Franklin D. Roosevelt as Governor of New York," *New York History* 75, no. 4 (1994): 397-398, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23181900.

rehabilitation of nature. The conservationists, like Pinchot, believed in a utilitarian approach to land usage. As stated in his 1905 memo, Pinchot believed that, when considering the production of natural resources, "the question should 'always be decided from the standpoint of the greatest good of the greatest number in the long run.'"[7] His belief that land should be conserved appropriately and used by man for "wise-use" and long-term sustainability clashed with that of America's great naturalist, John Muir. Muir was a *preservationist* and was deeply inspired by the American transcendentalist movement that envisioned the spiritual component of nature.[8] He often used religious imagery when discussing the sanctity of nature and believed in protecting nature *from* the use of man, not properly using it as Pinchot would advocate. According to historian Neil M. Maher, in the text *Nature's New Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement,* although Franklin Roosevelt was open to Muir's philosophy on preservation, during the Progressive Era he was more aligned with the Pinchot school of thought regarding the human impact and interaction with the environment.[9] He also saw a personal economic gain from conservationism as he farmed Christmas trees at his Hyde Park Estate.[10]

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[7] Neil M. Maher, *Nature's New Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008), 25.

[8] John M. Meyer, "Gifford Pinchot, John Muir, and the Boundaries of Politics in American Thought," *Polity 30* 30, no. 2 (Winter 1997): 269; 276.

[9] Maher, *Nature's New Deal*, 27.

[10] Maher, *Nature's New Deal*, 22.

Conservation and Public Office:

Roosevelt's interest in conservation followed him into public office. The vast landscape of upstate New York is home to robust mountain ranges, a quality of the state that never evaded Roosevelt's consciousness as a New York State Senator where he served from 1911 to 1913. He promoted five bills in 1912 related to forestry and four concerned with hunting and fishing regulations.[11] One of his most significant state senate debates was on the passage of the *Roosevelt-Jones Bill*. The bill concerned the cutting down of trees on land that was public and private. On March 3, 1912, he spoke to an audience in Troy, New York, advocating the passage of the bill. In the speech, he spoke about his interest in conservation as a duty today that will benefit future generations. He promoted a concept called "liberty of the community," a liberty that required certain behaviors of its members.[12] In contrast to "liberty of the community" was "liberty of the individual."[13] Roosevelt saw that people needed to reflect on their obligation to conserve the land appropriately, not for the sake of the individual, but for the sake of posterity:

> I have taken the conservation of our natural resources as the first lesson that points to the necessity for seeking community freedom, because I believe it to be the most important of all our lessons. Five hundred years ago the peasants of Europe, our ancestors, were not giving much thought to us who are here to-day. But I think a good many people in the audience have often considered what kind of a country we to-day are fashioning to hand down to our descendants.[14]

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[11] Douglas Brinkley, *Rightful Heritage: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Land of America* (New York, NY: HarperLuxe, an imprint of HarperCollinsPublishers, 2016), 60.

[12] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Speech by Roosevelt before the Troy, New York People's Forum," speech presented in Troy, NY, March 3, 1912, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Conservation, https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/cany/fdr/part1.htm.

[13] Roosevelt, "Speech by Roosevelt," speech, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Conservation.

[14] Roosevelt, "Speech by Roosevelt," speech, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Conservation.

Roosevelt had a strong supporter of the bill with Gifford Pinchot who spoke in Albany to lawmakers advocating the bill's passage. In the age of unchecked Big Business practices, the concept of state regulations of private land provoked fierce opposition. Socialists had reached a national audience and would see the rise of figures like Eugene Debs whose 1912 presidential run concerned proponents of laissez-faire capitalism. In the context of the fervor over government overreach and the power of private industries, Roosevelt was putting himself in the middle of the debate within his home state of New York. Ultimately, the bill would pass with modifications and compromises made to appease lawmakers leery of government overreach into the private market. In its final construct, the bill enabled the state to regulate clear-cutting on private lands and the mandating of fire prevention measures.[15] The bill's passage solidified Roosevelt's alignment with the conservation movement but the bill would pass without the inclusion of one of its most important clauses: the regulation of logging on private land.[16] Nevertheless, this alignment with conservation was an important precedent that would follow Roosevelt to the governor's mansion and later to the White House.

The 1912 presidential election was a tumultuous one in the country and would elicit young Senator Franklin Roosevelt's attention. The campaign saw Teddy Roosevelt re-enter political life in a contest for the Republican Party's ticket. Ultimately that ticket would go to incumbent William Taft, but Teddy Roosevelt was not to be cast aside. He took the Progressive Republicans under a new platform of the Bull Moose Party. Democrat Woodrow Wilson's progressive platform was outlined in his *New Freedom*

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[15] Brinkley, *Rightful Heritage*, 61; 68.

[16] Maher, *Nature's New Deal*, 24.

Plan, which is acknowledged by many as an antecedent to the *New Deal*. A theme of *New Freedom* was Wilson calling for a "new social age," which, in actuality, was more realized in the New Deal Age than the Wilson presidency.[17] Wilson, the winner of the 1912 election, spoke of government intervention in a new age, a change from the status quo of laissez-faire, non-interventionism politics:

> We used to think in the old-fashioned days when life was very simple that all that government had to do was to put on a policeman's uniform, and say, 'Now don't anybody hurt anybody else.' We used to say that the ideal of government was for every man to be left alone and not interfered with, except when he interfered with somebody else; and that the best government was the government that did as little governing as possible. That was the idea that obtained in Jefferson's time. But we are coming now to realize that life is so complicated that we are not dealing with the old conditions, and that the law has to step in and create new conditions under which we may live, the conditions which will make it tolerable for us to live.[18]

The Progressive Era was a movement that was interrupted by the Great War and then ended with a return to "normalcy" with the election of three consecutive conservative Republican presidents. The new decade was mostly a repudiation of the previous decade's liberalism. During the Progressive Era, Franklin Roosevelt, a young senator, was surrounded by a political climate that debated the expansive role of the central government in curtailing the growth and power of Big Business and unchecked capitalism. His presidency would be the greater fulfillment of these Progressive Era ideas. The crisis and scope of the Great Depression required an innovative response of the president and a more pronounced and active role of the federal government in the lives of the people.

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[17] Woodrow Wilson, *The New Freedom: A Call for the Emancipation of the Generous Energies of a People* (New York, NY: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1913), digital file.

[18] Wilson, *The New Freedom*.

In the 1912 election, the split in the Republican vote between Taft and Teddy Roosevelt enabled the election of Woodrow Wilson, a Democrat in an otherwise Republican political age. Although Roosevelt was pleased that his relative beat Taft in the race despite losing the election, his position as a Democrat would give him new opportunities within the Wilson administration. He would soon be offered the position of Assistant Secretary of the Navy, and in doing so he jumped from state to national political leadership.

Polio:

Roosevelt's life as a public figure might have come to a halt after a series of setbacks. His vice presidential run in 1920 with presidential hopeful James M. Cox was unsuccessful with the election of Republican Warren G. Harding. One of Roosevelt's great personal battles was about to begin. At the age of thirty-nine, Roosevelt contracted polio.

Although the cause of Roosevelt's polio will never be exactly determined, ironically his affinity for nature might have led to this affliction. In 1921 Roosevelt and a group of selected Boy Scouts headed to Bear Mountain, New York for the Jamboree festivities, a yearly event within the organization. The serenity and nature of Bear Mountain was a short drive but a drastic change from the hot concrete jungle of New York City. "Two of Roosevelt's most cherished ideas for societal improvement- the Boy Scouts and the state park movement- converged at the Bear Mountain Jamboree."[19] Unfortunately, water testing in 1920 revealed that Bear Mountain water sources were full

[19] Brinkley, *Rightful Heritage*, 94.

of hazardous bacterial elements. Swimming at Bear Mountain and coming into contact with such elements was most likely where he contracted the poliovirus, which, within days of his Bear Mountain retreat, would begin to manifest.[20] Following his trip to Bear Mountain, Roosevelt and his family made their way up north for vacation in Campobello, Maine.[21] What started out as fatigue quickly transgressed into immobility and complete paralysis of his lower body. He would be diagnosed with polio upon return to New York City.[22] The young and rising star in the Democratic Party was mostly sidelined politically for the better part of the decade.

To focus on his health and rehabilitation, Roosevelt removed himself from public office. He found solace and recuperative elements in the thermal waters of Warm Springs, Georgia, where he bought a house in 1927; he enjoyed his Georgia getaway's country roads and natural setting as he enjoyed his Hyde Park Estate. His experience in the South exposed him more readily to the social culture of the South, entrenched in Jim Crow segregation. Although his priority in the 1920s was his convalescence from polio, there would later be political implications for Roosevelt's trips to the South, specifically, as he would find himself once again thrust into state and then national politics.[23] Throughout the 1920s, Roosevelt continued to support the state park movement around the country. In 1925, New York State Governor Al Smith appointed Roosevelt as the first chairman of the *Taconic State Park Commission.* Upon Smith's bid for the presidency, he would

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[20] Brinkley, *Rightful Heritage*, 95.

[21] Curtis W. Hart, "Franklin Delano Roosevelt: A Famous Patient," *Journal of Religion and Health* 53, no. 4 (2014): http://www.jstor.org/stable/24485162.

[22] Brinkley, *Rightful Heritage*, 97.

[23] Brinkley, *Rightful Heritage*, 112.

convince Roosevelt to reenter politics and run for the position of New York State Governor. After some convincing, Roosevelt heeded the call to public service once again. He won the race for New York State's Governor consecutively in 1928 and 1930. His base of voters was broadened by his continued connection to rural New York and his advocacy for farmers and conservationists.[24] As governor, he continued to advocate state conservation. But as the new governor settled back into elected office, the crippling economic crisis of the Great Depression would become the most pivotal issue, one that would follow him into the White House.

The Great Depression:

When the country plummeted into the Great Depression in 1929, Governor Roosevelt would have to face the crisis as the leader of his state. What developed in New York State was a precursor to the *Civilian Conservation Corps*, a creation that was done with the assistance of Roosevelt's longtime friend and fellow New York state agricultural enthusiast, Henry Morgenthau Jr. They discussed the concept of employing unemployed workers in reforestation, and in doing so they laid "the seeds of the New Deal's Civilian Conservation Corps."[25]

The New Deal approach of government intervention to address a national economic crisis, specifically employing young men in conservation, has to be traced back to Governor Roosevelt's Temporary Emergency Relief Administration (TERA). In a speech given on April 1, 1931, via radio, Roosevelt addressed his constituent listeners

[24] Brinkley, *Rightful Heritage*, 120.

[25] Brinkley, *Rightful Heritage*, 131.

and spoke about the call for conservation in the state of New York. He spoke on behalf of the Conservation Department on the meaning of conservation: "We use the word conservation, particularly with reference to the conserving - the saving, the protecting and the increasing - of the physical resources nature has provided within our state's boundaries."[26] He continued to ask his audience to consider how to:

> Make these resources most useful in advancing the health and happiness of those who live here now and how also to hand them on as a heritage to our descendants, at the very least unimpaired; at the best, augmented and increased and made more available and useful to our descendants.[27]

This was a similar sentiment he referenced during his time as senator in his "liberty of the community" speech.

TERA, New York's first relief program, had an overarching goal of employing New Yorkers and it would do so through several initiatives. One aspect of TERA was employing young men to plant trees throughout the state.[28] Supervision of TERA was turned over to Harry Hopkins. Hopkins was Roosevelt's long-term trusted advisor dating back from the governorship to the creation and implementation of the New Deal and through the end of the Roosevelt presidency.[29] The success of the program as a precursor to the New Deal cannot be overstated. The foremost *Civilian Conservation Corps* historian, John A. Salmond, stated that 10,000 people were given temporary employment doing tree-planting as part of New York state's unemployment relief program.[30] A May 6,

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[26] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Radio Speech on Conservation," speech presented in Albany, NY, April 1, 1931, Franklin: Access to the FDR Library's Digital Collection, http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/_resources/images/msf/msf00429.

[27] Roosevelt, "Radio Speech," speech, Franklin: Access to the FDR Library's Digital Collection.

[28] Brinkley, *Rightful Heritage*, 135.

[29] Brinkley, *Rightful Heritage*, 136.

[30] John A. Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942; a New Deal Case Study* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1967, 8.

1931 article from *The Olean Evening Times* celebrated the work of Governor Roosevelt: "Reports for the week ending April 2nd, for instance, show a total of 1,731,180 trees planted bringing the season's total to 2,226,488 trees and indicating the rapidity with which planting operations are getting underway."[31] The article continued by noting that Governor Roosevelt was a "very pronounced reforestation fan," personally overseeing "the planting of five thousand young trees on idle portions of his own estate near Hyde Park, Dutchess county."[32]

A bill that became the centerpiece of Governor Roosevelt's conservation program in the state of New York was the *Hewitt Reforestation Amendment*. The purpose of the bill was to make $19 million available for reforestation in the state over a set period of eleven years. The goal was for the state to buy land for reforestation.[33] On November 4, 1931, the *Hewitt Reforestation Amendment* was passed and its success was considered a major victory for Governor Roosevelt and a stepping stone to his presidential bid. *The Elmira-Star Gazette* recognized the significance of the victory: "Governor Roosevelt laughed away a suggestion today that the adoption of the reforestation amendment yesterday could be construed as a 'personal victory' over former Governor Smith, who opposed the amendment to the constitution."[34] The article continued by saying that Roosevelt "returned from his home at Hyde Park to find his desk piled with letters and

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[31] "Making Rapid Strides," *Olean Evening Times* (Olean, NY), May 6, 1931, 16, accessed February 21, 2023, http://newspapers.com.

[32] "Making Rapid," 16.

[33] Brinkley, *Rightful Heritage*, 138.

[34] "Party Lineup at Albany Unchanged; Roosevelt Wins on Reforestation; Democrats Win Congress Strength," *Elmira Star-Gazette* (Elmira, NY), November 4, 1931.

telegrams congratulating him on the voters' approval of the amendment."[35] The amendment was a launching pad for Roosevelt's presidential aspirations as Democrats around the country started to look to the Empire State's leader as their next presidential candidate.[36] In January 1932 Roosevelt began his run for the presidency of the United States.

President Roosevelt and the New Deal:

The tumult of the Herbert Hoover presidential years amid the Great Depression made the American people eager for a new approach to economic hardship. Roosevelt obliged the populace. At the Democratic National Convention on July 2, 1932, Roosevelt famously said:

> I pledge you, I pledge myself, to a new deal for the American people. Let us all here assembled constitute ourselves prophets of a new order of competence and of courage. This is more than a political campaign; it is a call to arms. Give me your help, not to win votes alone, but to win in the crusade to restore America to its own people.[37]

And so a metaphorical battle had been waged by the presidential hopeful in the fight against the Depression.

Roosevelt's win in the 1932 presidential election, according to historian Roger Daniels as well as most conventional historical evaluations of the event, was not so much a triumph for Roosevelt but a dismissal of Hoover's response to the Great Depression.[38]

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[35] "Party Lineup."

[36] Brinkley, *Rightful Heritage*, 140.

[37] Franklin Roosevelt, "Franklin D. Roosevelt, Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago" (speech, Chicago, IL, July 2, 1932).

[38] Roger Daniels, *Franklin D. Roosevelt: Road to the New Deal 1882-1939* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 107.

The victory for the Democratic Party was not just for the new president but also for Congress, a victory that would repeat itself in both the House and the Senate through the end of WWII.[39]

When Franklin Roosevelt inherited the Great Depression as president, the economic collapse was nearly four years old. One-quarter of the labor force was unemployed, banks were failing at a frightening rate, agricultural prices were plummeting, and the American people were losing faith in their established institutions of democracy and capitalism. "Whether revolution was a real possibility or not, faith in a free system was plainly waning. Capitalism, it seemed to many, had spent its force; democracy could not rise to economic crisis," states Schlesinger.[40] Eager to offer a new brand of presidential leadership, Roosevelt promised the country a departure from his predecessor Herbert Hoover's laissez-faire approach to the crisis. On March 4, 1933, the new president pledged "action, and action now" in his *First Inaugural Address*.[41] He called upon the country to act together in the time of despair, requiring a level of "interdependence on each other."[42] In the same passion for what he previously called "liberty of the community," as a New York State Senator, he now called on an entire nation. He stated:

> We can not merely take but we must give as well; that if we are to go forward, we must move as a trained and loyal army willing to sacrifice for the good of a common discipline, because without such discipline no progress is made, no leadership becomes effective.[43]

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[39] Daniels, *Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 109.

[40] Schlesinger, *The Coming*, 3.

[41] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "First Inaugural Address" (address, Washington D.C., March 4, 1933).

[42] Roosevelt, "First Inaugural."

[43] Roosevelt, "First Inaugural."

His inaugural address prepared the American people for a "temporary departure from that normal balance of public procedure," an early promise he would fulfill on the fifth day of his presidency with the calling of a special session of Congress.[44] The first of two sessions of the 73rd Congress would last from March 9th to June 16th, 1933, thus establishing the *First One Hundred Days* as a benchmark for measuring a new president's early accomplishments.[45] On June 8, 1934, Roosevelt reflected in an address on the accomplishments of the 73rd Congress. He outlined the three Rs of economic recovery: relief, recovery, and reform. Relief was the belief that, in the land of plenty with resources to spare, no American should starve. Relief would be accomplished through access to work: "Direct giving shall, wherever possible, be supplemented by provision for useful and remunerative work."[46] He went on to discuss recovery, specifically citing work in the advancement of agriculture and industry. And finally, he discussed reform. Reforms were to prevent the economic crisis from happening again by addressing failures of the past.[47]

Roosevelt was careful to surround himself with a team of experts and trusted advisors in what became known as his "Brain Trust." The unprecedented nature of the Great Depression called for an unprecedented response, but that does not imply that Roosevelt had a map for success. However, the swift response of Congress and the

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[44] Roosevelt, "First Inaugural."

[45] E. Pendleton Herring, "American Government and Politics: First Session of the Seventy-third Congress, March 9, 1933, to June 16, 1933," *The American Political Science Review* 28, no. 1 (1934): 65, https://doi.org/10.2307/1946722.

[46] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Review of the Achievements of the Seventy-third Congress" (speech, June 28, 1934).

[47] Roosevelt, "Review of the Achievements."

president, along with Roosevelt's personal qualities of optimism and confidence "created the illusion of mastery."[48]

The *Civilian Conservation Corps*:

The creation of the *Civilian Conservation Corps* was based on Roosevelt's affinity for the natural world. The dual need for land conservation and to address America's floundering and unemployed youth converged with the creation of the CCC. The inspiration for the environmental component of the CCC was born in Hyde Park and stayed with Roosevelt through his personal and professional life. The CCC "might be said to have had its genesis on President Roosevelt's estate at Hyde Park. There, for eighteen years, Mr. Roosevelt has been putting into practice the forestry ideas of which the corps was an outgrowth," reported the *New York Times* on April 30, 1933.[49] That same article identified Hyde Park as a microcosm for Roosevelt's national initiative: "In many ways, what he has done and is doing on his farm overlooking the Hudson is comparable on a miniature scale with what may be done in our national forests."[50] According to John Salmond, through the *Civilian Conservation Corps*, Roosevelt "brought together two wasted resources, the young men and the land, in an attempt to save both."[51] Historian Olen Cole Jr. states that the problem of America's youth was abundantly clear as thousands of young people wandered the roads and hopped around on

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[48] Daniels, *Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 131.

[49] Nelson C. Brown, "President Has Long Practiced Forestry," *The New York Times* (New York, NY), April 30, 1933.

[50] Brown, "President Has Long."

[51] Salmond, *The Civilian*, 4.

freight trains in a desperate search for work.[52] On April 17, 1933, the Department of Labor issued a bulletin which offered answers to questions about the *Civilian Conservation Corps*. When asked what the purpose of emergency conservation work was, the response was, “In a word, the purpose of this work is both to build men and to build trees.”[53] The dual intention of the agency was not lost to most observers. A correspondent for American Forests, as reported by the *New York Times* in November 1933, observed the impact of the agency on “city-bred youngsters suddenly transported from the white lights and the din of traffic into the great silences.”[54] While they started out being homesick, he remarked, they soon immersed themselves in their new natural environment, climbing mountaintops and exploring the wilderness. In the process of learning about conservation, they were also “building for themselves health and character.”[55]

While the agency's goals were clear to Roosevelt from the onset of his presidency, when the CCC was first created, it had to go through scrutiny and debate. In preparation for its creation, on March 14, 1933, Roosevelt sent a memorandum to four department secretaries (War, Interior, Agriculture, and Labor) asking them to “constitute” themselves as a committee to coordinate the creation of the *Civilian Conservation Corps*.[56] The four departments would be tasked with different roles regarding the agency’s function and

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[52] Olen Cole, *African-American Experience in the Civilian Conservation Corps* (n.p.: University Press of Florida, 1999), 9.

[53] "Questions and Answers for the Information of Men Offered the Opportunity to Apply for National Emergency Conservation Work," April 17, 1933, Box #1, Civilian Conservation Corps Papers, FDR Presidential Library & Museum, Hyde Park, NY.

[54] "The C.C.C.," *The New York Times* (New York, NY), November 5, 1933, 70.

[55] "The C.C.C.," 70.

[56] Salmond, *The Civilian*, 11.

implementation. On March 21, 1933, Roosevelt addressed Congress on the creation of a conservation project to relieve the unemployed. He articulated the need for a "broad public works labor-creating program."[57] He predicted enrollment of "250,000 men…by early summer" if Congress went forward with this program.[58] The significance of the program was not only the tangible work of reforestation and conservation work but also what Roosevelt called the "moral and spiritual value of such work."[59] When addressing a beleaguered nation upon inauguration, Roosevelt made it very clear that the Depression was a war and that he needed "broad Executive power to wage a war against the emergency."[60] Roosevelt continued this analogy in his March 21st address to Congress: "We can take a vast army of these unemployed out into healthful surroundings," through the creation of the *Civilian Conservation Corps*.[61] He recognized the danger of "idleness" and the necessity of addressing the danger of a population of young men, out of a job and void of purpose.[62]

The vision and execution of the New Deal cannot be separated from those who advised, informed, molded, supported, and carried out the president's policies. Roosevelt deliberately surrounded himself with innovative minds. It is impossible to address the

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[57] Franklin Roosevelt, "Message to Congress regarding Civilian Conservation Corps," March 21, 1933, Box 14, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Master Speech File, 1898-1945, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Master Speech File, 1898-1945, Hyde Park, NY.

[58] Roosevelt, "Message to Congress."

[59] Roosevelt, "Message to Congress."

[60] Roosevelt, "First Inaugural."

[61] Roosevelt, "Message to Congress."

[62] Roosevelt, "Message to Congress."

creation or mobilization of the *Civilian Conservation Corps* without highlighting the influence of such individuals as Louis Howe and Frances Perkins.

Louis Howe was a longtime friend of Franklin Roosevelt and his personal secretary, advisor, and confidant. The two first met during Roosevelt's bid for the New York Senate in 1911. He was a journalist by trade who, like Roosevelt, opposed the Tammany Hall political machine. When Howe met Roosevelt, he was impressed by the young politician. Finding himself unemployed in 1912, Howe wrote a letter to Roosevelt and inquired about working on his campaign for reelection in the New York State Senate race. While bedridden due to typhoid, Roosevelt answered Howe's request and asked him to run his senatorial campaign, which he physically could not do.[63] Roosevelt's reelection was the beginning of Howe's major influence on what would become a more than twenty-year devotion. The partnership between Howe and Roosevelt would be crucial to Roosevelt until Howe's early death in 1936. Howe would remain like an extended family member of the Roosevelts.[64] Roosevelt's charisma and political acumen in combination with Howe's intelligence and experience with the press combined for a political duo that would create the New Deal. Their partnership would benefit the entire nation. When Howe died at the age of 65, the *New York Times* reported: "Mr. Howe had been the confidant and counselor of Mr. Roosevelt for more than twenty-five years. Much of the success that attended the political career of the President was attributed to his sagacity."[65] He is considered one of the main architects of the *Civilian Conservation Corps*.

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[63] J. M. Fenster, *FDR's Shadow: Louis Howe, the Force That Shaped Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 93.

[64] Upon Louis Howe's death, it was Roosevelt who informed his wife, Grace.

[65] "Louis M'H. Howe, Roosevelt Friend, Dies at Capital," *The New York Times* (New York, NY), April 19, 1936, 1.

Frances Perkins, the first woman to hold a cabinet position in American history, recalled the creation of the *Civilian Conservation Corps* in her memoir *The Roosevelt I Knew.* Her role as a vital hand in the creation of the New Deal and her unique position as the only female cabinet member would play a significant role in bringing up questions about gender and the *Civilian Conservation Corps*. Perkins recalled the fervor through which Roosevelt promoted the CCC but also the challenges it proposed: "It was characteristic of him that he conceived the project, boldly rushed it through, and happily left it to others to worry about the details."[66]

Perkins'coming of age in the Progressive Era cannot be overstated in her ascension into the Roosevelt administration. Perkins' draw to the cause of the American worker and labor reform was solidified after witnessing the tragedy of the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire in 1911 firsthand, as an onlooker in Washington Square Park.[67] For Perkins, the tragedy of the Triangle Fire underscored the danger of an unregulated workspace. In 1928 she became New York State's Industrial Commissioner, overseeing the entire labor department, under the leadership of then-Governor Franklin Roosevelt. When Roosevelt was elected to the presidency, he named Perkins Secretary of Labor. Perkins asserted that the day she witnessed the Triangle Fire, was "the day the New Deal was born," indicating the impact the event had on her commitment to labor reform and progressivism.[68]

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[66] Frances Perkins, *The Roosevelt I Knew* (New York, NY: Viking Press, 1946), 169.

[67] The Triangle Shirtwaist Fire of 1911 was a deadly workplace disaster in a garment factory in Manhattan. With the death of 146 workers, the fire drew attention to working conditions and labor rights during the Industrial Revolution. The very public deaths of so many led to the adoption of workplace laws and regulations.

[68] Sprague, "Her Life," Frances Perkins Center.

Debating the Bill:

The first congressional hearing of the proposed *Civilian Conservation Corps* bill was held from March 23rd to the 24th, 1933. The hearing brought proponents and opponents of the agency to speak. The original draft of the bill was recorded in a text entitled: *Unemployment Relief: Joint Hearings Before the Committee on Education and Labor.* The proposed bill explained the president's purpose of selecting from the unemployed citizens of the country "a civilian conservation corps, who shall be enrolled for a term of one year, unless sooner discharged; no discharges to be permitted except under such rules and regulations as the President may direct."[69] The bill continued by explaining the plan for a monthly payment to the enrollees and the intended nature of the work.

Frances Perkins made her Congressional debut as the Secretary of Labor in defending President Roosevelt's *Civilian Conservation Corps*.[70] She was questioned on various aspects of the bill regarding funding and wages, responding to each question in support of the bill's passage while clarifying how it was intended to operate. When asked if it was a bill in response to unemployment or relief she asserted, "I consider it very much a relief measure. I consider it only as an employment measure in that it affords some measure of employment and will take a certain number of men out of those who are

[69] *Unemployment Relief: Joint Hearings before the Committee on Education and Labor*, 73rd (1933).

[70] "Miss Perkins Firm in Jobless Defense," *The New York Times* (New York, NY), March 24, 1933, 10.

being provided with relief, of some kind or other."[71] *The New York Times* recounted that Secretary Perkins spoke on the bill "with authority in the face of criticism."[72]

The statement of William Green, the President of the American Federation of Labor, offered some of the bill's most vigorous opposition: "Labor looks upon the measure with feelings of very grave apprehension. We are deeply concerned over the precedents that will be set through the enactment of this proposed legislation."[73] He continued by indicating his concern over the militarization of labor, as the corps would be operated by the Army: "We cannot understand why it is necessary…to regiment labor, to enlist it in any army, even though you may call it an army of conservation."[74] As stated above, the original bill gave Roosevelt the authority to enlist an army of workers for the period of a year with no discharges.[75] That provision, stated Green, "violates the very spirit of voluntarism, of freedom of personal action."[76] While unemployment was a primary concern, for Green and other labor leaders, to place the corps under military control was a dangerous precedent.[77] Herbert Benjamin, a communist representing the National Committee of the Unemployed Council of the United States, went to the extreme of calling the proposed bill one that "will serve to legalize a system of forced labor."[78]

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[71] *Unemployment Relief: Joint Hearings.*

[72] "Miss Perkins," 10.

[73] *Unemployment Relief: Joint Hearings.*

[74] *Unemployment Relief: Joint Hearings.*

[75] Salmond, *The Civilian*, 13.

[76] *Unemployment Relief: Joint Hearings.*

[77] *Unemployment Relief: Joint Hearings.*

[78] *Unemployment Relief: Joint Hearings.*

With careful consideration of objections made to the bill, a new bill was drafted: "Gone were the restrictive provisions concerning enrollment and discharges."[79] Despite some dissenters, criticism of the agency was relatively insignificant and did not greatly impact public opinion. The final bill, in the language of the document, was created "for the purpose of relieving the acute condition of widespread distress and unemployment" existing in the country.[80] It empowered the president to carry out the task of enforcing various departments to run and operate the agency "in the construction, maintenance and carrying on of works of a public nature in connection with the forestation of lands."[81] It was approved on March 31, 1933.

Following the creation of the *Civilian Conservation Corps*, under the original name *Emergency Conservation Work* (ECW), Executive Order 6101 was issued on April 5, 1933, detailing how the agency was laid out, funded, and administered. Although it was first outlined as the ECW, the term *Civilian Conservation Corps* had been used by Roosevelt in a March 21st address and would ultimately replace the ECW. As a nod to his labor opponents, Roosevelt was thoughtful in his assignment of Robert Fechner as the director of the agency. This appointment was most likely at the suggestion of Louis Howe.[82] Fechner was a known entity amongst labor leaders as the vice president of the International Association of Machinists.[83] He would serve in this position until his death

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[79] Salmond, *The Civilian*, 19.

[80] Emergency Conservation Work Act, S. S. 598, 73rd, 1st. (Mar. 31, 1933).

[81] Emergency Conservation Work Act. 1933.

[82] Joseph M. Speakman, "Into the Woods: The First Year of the Civilian Conservation Corps," *Prologue Magazine* 38, no. 3 (Fall 2006): accessed March 4, 2023, https://www.archives.gov.

[83] Schlesinger, *The Coming*, 338.

in 1939. His *New York Times* obituary cited a letter Roosevelt wrote to Fechner's widow bestowing praise: "As director of the *Civilian Conservation Corps* he brought to this public service great administrative ability, vision, and indefatigable industry. His death is a loss to the CCC, and to the nation."[84] Moreover, four departments were tasked with actualizing the agency. The Secretaries of War, Agriculture, Interior, and Labor were to appoint representatives to constitute an Advisory Council to the new agency.[85] The President's orders following the creation of the *Civilian Conservation Corps* directed that 250,000 men be in the camps by the beginning of the summer. It was decided that the corps would consist of unmarried men between the ages of 18 and 25 who were on relief.

The *Civilian Conservation Corps* was an innovative program that offered government relief money; however, compensation was not given in the form of the dreaded government dole. Men would be required to take up physical labor, feel part of a fraternity of other young men, and do meaningful and productive work for their country. In a radio address to the country on July 17, 1933, months after the agency's creation, Roosevelt spoke to this aim:

> You are evidence that we are seeking to get away as fast as we possibly can, from the dole, from soup kitchens, and from free lodging - Because the government is paying you wages and paying you to do actual work - work which is needed now and for the future and will bring a definite financial return to the people of the nation.[86]

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[84] "Robert Fechner, Head of CCC, Dies," *The New York Times* (New York, NY), January 1, 1940.

[85] Exec. Order No. 6101, 3 C.F.R. (1933).

[86] Speech by Franklin Roosevelt, "CCC Camp Speech," July 17, 1933, Box 15, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Master Speech File, 1898-1945, FDR Presidential Library & Museum, Hyde Park, NY.

He emphasized the necessity for good honest work and the dangers of trying to get money in exchange for no effort. He called the hard-working men of the CCC the *"vanguard"* of that spirit.[87]

The *Civilian Conservation Corps* is Mobilized:

In an address by Robert Fechner on May 6, 1933, the new director spoke to concerns about the agency and also explained how the *Civilian Conservation Corps* would operate and be administered. In his memorandum, his first line hailed that the new presidential administration sought "to put unemployed men and women back to work."[88] The incorporation of women into this statement was an empty promise when it came to intended employment within the CCC. The gender-inclusive rhetoric was just a bold proclamation and not an actual commitment. He continued by later stating that the Emergency Conservation Work program would seek to employ 250,000 *men*. Fechner listed the work that would be administered by each department: The Labor Department would be in charge of recruitment, the War Department would operate the camps starting with enrollment, the Departments of Agriculture and Interior were responsible for the selection of the campsites, organizing the type of work that would be conducted. Representatives of the Departments of Agriculture and Interior would supervise the conservation work being done while the Army would oversee the administration of the camps.[89] Part of the allowance of $30 a month to the young men would be sent to the

[87] Speech by Roosevelt, "CCC Camp."

[88] Memorandum by Robert Fechner, "The Address of Robert Fechner," May 6, 1933, Franklin Roosevelt Official File 268 Box 1, Civilian Conservation Corps, FDR Presidential Library & Museum, Hyde Park, NY.

[89] Memorandum by Fechner, "The Address."

individual's family in need of financial assistance. As mentioned above, although the beginning of the address acknowledged unemployed women, the comment was tertiary because the corps was strictly a male-only entity and women were never again mentioned in the memorandum. Unmarried men were selected, according to Fechner, because of the "nature of the work" and so as to not split up families as the job required men to live on campsites away from their homes.[90]

The agency was picky about who enrolled. The corps was not designed for "unattached, homeless, transient men;" it was for men with families who would benefit from the aid.[91] "We want the best men that are available - and I might add- at this point- that there will be no discrimination on account of race, creed, color, or politics."[92] The anti-discrimination clause was pulled directly from the language of the March 31st bill that created the agency. Incidentally, eight years later when the government was faced with the mounting crisis of Nazi aggression and imperialist Japan, Roosevelt, through Executive Order 8802, again would call for an end to discrimination based on race, creed, and national origins, but this time in the defense industries. But what did it mean to call for an end to discrimination in 1933 based on personal identifiers such as race or creed? All men would be *accepted* into the corps, however, one of the most persistent elements of discrimination would remain intact in American society: segregation. African American workers operated in segregated units throughout the country. From the Jim Crow South into the suburbs of New Jersey, the anti-discriminatory *Civilian*

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[90] Memorandum by Fechner, "The Address."

[91] Memorandum by Fechner, "The Address."

[92] Memorandum by Fechner, "The Address."

Conservation Corps did as the American military did, it kept Black and white soldiers separate.

To dispel any claims that the agency was conscripted or forced labor, Fechner was sure to underscore that the agency would be staffed on an entirely voluntary basis. As some critics saw the *Civilian Conservation Corps* as a military unit in disguise, Fechner negated that concept: "No one will be 'drafted' or even urged to enroll in order to support his family. Only those who are anxious to have a part in this project are wanted."[93] He later added: "Let me make this point clear. When an applicant enrolls for the Emergency Conservation Work camp he does not enlist or become a soldier. There is no militarism in the usual sense of the word."[94]

While the language was inclusive of all men, it was clear that the agency had no regard for the work and unemployment status of women. Nor did it define ending discrimination. Inclusion of Black workers into the agency would maximize the production and work accomplished; however, it never upset the status quo of America's unenlightened racial dynamics. Fechner, a Southerner by birth, went as far as to defend the agency's stance on segregation in a letter to Thomas L. Griffith, Jr., president of the Los Angeles branch of the NAACP. Responding to a letter written by Griffith to President Roosevelt on the issue of segregation, Fechner stated that he was "satisfied that the negro enrollees themselves prefer to be in companies composed exclusively of their own race."[95] He continued by defending the *separate but equal* nature of the agency:

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[93] Memorandum by Fechner, "The Address."

[94] Memorandum by Fechner, "The Address."

[95] Robert Fechner to Thomas L. Griffith, 21 September 1935, "CCC Negro Selection" file, Box 700, General Correspondence of the Director, Record Group 35, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

> This segregation is not discrimination and cannot be so construed. The negro companies are assigned to the same types of work, have identical equipment, are served the same food, and have the same quarters as white enrollees.[96]

In a bulletin issued by the Department of Labor, a series of questions and answers about the CCC were formulated. One question asked was, "will there be any discrimination because of race, creed, color, or politics?" The succinct and unsubstantiated answer from the Department of Labor was: "there will not."[97] Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes wrote to Fechner later in 1935 encouraging him to offer more CCC opportunities to Black Americans in supervisory positions within the agency: "I am quite certain that Negroes can function in supervisory capacities just as efficiently as can white men and I do not think that they should be discriminated against merely on account of their color."[98] This was to no avail and Roosevelt sided with Fechner on the matter, "but asked that his name not be drawn into the subject."[99] So while the *Civilian Conservation Corps* might be touted as an innovative and *progressive* approach to government intervention during an economic downfall, it was still restrained by the country's regressive views of race and gender. The federal government continued to uphold the mirage of racial equality of opportunities despite racial segregation.

It did not take long for camp enrollment to begin filling up the new "tree army" as the *Civilian Conservation Corps* workforce would be dubbed. By June 1933, there were 1,300 camps nationwide, and by the end of July, the number of enrollees had already

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[96] Robert Fechner to Thomas L. Griffith.

[97] "Questions and Answers for the Information of Men Offered the Opportunity to Apply for National Emergency Conservation Work," April 17, 1933, Box #1, *Civilian Conservation Corps* Papers, FDR Presidential Library & Museum, Hyde Park, NY.

[98] Qtd. in Daniels, *Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 146.

[99] Daniels, *Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 146.

surpassed Roosevelt's projection, totaling 300,000 men. By the time the agency folded with a nation preparing for war in 1942, 2.5 million had been part of this unique experiment in work and conservation.[100]

Unique to the CCC as an agency of public works was that the enrollees would live on-site. Enrolled men were contracted to work for six months in return for their financial allowance. "No man should start in on the Emergency Conservation Work unless he expects to work through the six months," as per the Department of Labor.[101] The recruiting process by the Department of Labor included a physical exam; once the young man passed the exam, he would be sent by the government to an Army post for more physical examinations, and for vaccinations against smallpox and typhoid.[102] Men were required to take an oath upon enrollment, in which they swore to serve their six months, obey the authority entrusted to lead them and follow the rules of the CCC. The men would be tasked with a 40-hour work week, eight hours a day, Monday through Friday. On their off days, the enrollees would have many activities to choose from to fill up their time. A priority would be the maintenance of their barracks, requiring cleaning and organization. Educational opportunities for those interested would be offered, specifically opportunities in studying forestry. Outdoor activities related to hiking, camping, and fishing would be available. For those interested, religious services would also be offered.[103] Each man could take away from his experience in the CCC money, improved health, and valuable life experiences.

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[100] Schlesinger, *The Coming*, 339.

[101] "Questions and Answers."

[102] "Questions and Answers."

[103] "Questions and Answers."

> Six months of hard but healthy outdoor work in the forests or national parks, in an enterprise that is for the benefit of the people of this country. Six months of camp life, food, clothing, shelter, medical services, and recreation plus $30 a month cash allowance for himself and his dependents.[104]

In the first summer, tents were utilized for the housing, to be replaced with wooden barracks: "The camp buildings include barracks for sleeping and living quarters, a mess hall and kitchen, a recreation hall, room for educational activities, tool houses, garages, bath houses, and other incidental buildings."[105] Army officers and later reserve officers were called to active duty to run the camps. In addition to camp work, the men were to partake in 10 hours of educational work a week. The type of manual work done at each camp was multifaceted. Fechner factored that over 150 different types of work were performed. From insect control to tree planting to recreational work in parks, the CCC covered many areas of natural conservation. In a 1937 report, Fechner concluded that "enrollees have planted more than a billion trees on wastelands as part of a reforestation program designed to return millions of acres of lands to production."[106]

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The *Civilian Conservation Corps* has existed in American memory as one of the most significant agencies of the New Deal. Images and memories of young men working in tandem for the betterment of the environment are a hallmark of the New Deal. The work completed has a tangible legacy in the nation's environmental landscape. The men built roads, parks, picnic areas, nature walks, and other physical reminders that are still in use today. They planted trees, fought against mosquitoes, built retainer walls, and blazed

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[104] "Questions and Answers."

[105] Robert Fechner, "The Civilian Conservation Corps Program," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 194 (1937): 132, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1022150.

[106] Fechner, "The Civilian," 133.

trails through parks. The nine years of the agency would employ 3 million American young men. The creation of the *Civilian Conservation Corps* was not born out of the Great Depression; it was cultivated in the upbringing and development of Franklin Roosevelt, dating back to his childhood in Hyde Park, New York. He came into his political primacy at the height of the Progressive Era. His New Deal vision of government intervention in the economy was a rejection of his predecessor's response to the Great Depression. As president, Roosevelt felt responsible for the welfare of the American people. Although the Progressive Era ended, its legacy was in those it influenced, Roosevelt included. The influences behind the creation of the *Civilian Conservation Corps* were all prominent figures or aspiring reformers during that age, from Gifford Pinchot to Frances Perkins and Louis Howe. Notions of both conservation and government action were perfectly merged into Roosevelt's "tree army." When it was over, there were over 4,500 camps and 3 billion trees planted.[107] The restoration of the land would serve as a model for future conservation initiatives. Additionally, a generation of young men was given the chance to serve their country and find purpose during a crisis. Instead of fomenting rebellion against their government, through work initiatives, they had the federal government to thank for their job. The patriotism these camps fostered would offer a seamless transition from life in CCC barracks to serving in WWII.

Although the New Deal was a marker of American progressivism, it was not a wholesale reversal of the social norms of the 1920s. In the *Civilian Conservation Corps*, its administration and organization maintained segregation and brought the concept of separate but equal in CCC camps beyond the Deep South and throughout the nation. In

[107] Speakman, "Into the Woods."

predominantly racially homogenous white communities in the North, the introduction of all-Black CCC camps was seen as an affront and met with fierce rejection and backlash. The federal government refused to broach the topic of integration in the camps and Black *participation* in the Corps was seen as *inclusive enough*. The exclusion of women in the Corps was a foregone conclusion; solving the unemployment crisis in the CCC was for men, not women. A New York State Camp in Bear Mountain specifically created for women was the exception and not the rule regarding the government's responsibility for the unemployment of young women. The all-white CCC camps sought to build up the body politic of young unemployed men physically, educationally, and emotionally. A case study of a female camp in Bear Mountain, New York, the all-white camps of the Palisades and Teterboro (both in Bergen County, NJ), and the all-Black camps of Teterboro offer a lens through which the CCC can be analyzed for its successes and limitations. Just a short drive from Roosevelt's Hyde Park Estate, these cases are a lens into the extent to which American liberalism was willing to grow in the *Civilian Conservation Corps,* 90 years ago.

Chapter Three

The CCC in Teterboro

Dr. Frederic Morrow of Hackensack New Jersey, once an advisor to President Dwight D. Eisenhower, recalled his youth in Bergen County and the racism his Black family experienced. Notably, Dr. Morrow was the first African American to hold an executive position at the White House; his older sister was a trailblazer in her own right. Nellie K. Morrow Parker was the first Black school teacher in Bergen County when she was hired in Hackensack in 1922. After her appointment, the Morrows were subjected to intimidation by the Ku Klux Klan and other organizations. In 1981, when a Hackensack school was being named to honor her 42 years of educational service, Dr. Morrow gave a speech on his sister's behalf in which he recalled their childhood. He said that, when growing up in Hackensack, the region was "'steeped in racism and prejudice.'"[108] In a retrospective of notable women from New Jersey, Parker's story was told by the *Women's Project of New Jersey* publication in 1990: "It was difficult to grow up Black in Hackensack. New Jersey had been one of the last states in the Union to outlaw slavery, and Hackensack had had its share of slaves, so the specter of slavery remained."[109] This *specter of slavery*, taking the form of racial discrimination and intimidation, would remain a presence in the county. Dr. Morrow's recollection of the county as *steeped in racism* is an insight that could be better understood when exploring historical newspapers and other recollections of the past.

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[108] Ray Pellacchia, "City School Re-Named After Education Pioneer." *The Reporter: Central Bergen* (NJ), September 23, 1981, 1-3. Box 1 Folder 49 Bernard Bush Collection Rutgers University.

[109] Joan N. Burstyn, "Past and Promise: Lives of New Jersey Women." *The Women's Project of New Jersey*, 1990, 373-75. Box 1 Folder 49 Bernard Bush Collection Rutgers University.

The Second Coming of the Ku Klux Klan, efforts to limit the racial integration of Bergen County communities, and resistance against Black *Civilian Conservation Corps* workers all emerged in and around the 1930s. When a CCC camp of nearly 200 Black men was scheduled to reside in the small town of Teterboro in 1935, the resistance to their appointment was part of a broader effort by some Bergen County residents to curtail changing cultural and racial demographics in the region.

In 1934, in the middle of the Great Depression, the great African American boxing champion Jack Johnson was residing in Teterboro, NJ, where he staged boxing shows in an old hangar at Teterboro Airport. One day, he opened his mail and came across a startling warning: "This is to inform you that we will get you out of Hasbrouck Heights and Teterboro. The first unfair thing you did was to offend our shows in Hackensack. Furthermore, we are against your color."[110] The postscript of the note ended by warning him of a cross burning and the note was signed by the KKK. While the leadership of the Klan denied any participation in writing this note, it is clear that somebody associated themself with the hate group and anonymously fired off a letter intending to intimidate. Was this note reflective of the sentiment of the region or was it an outlier? This reaction to Jack Johnson became newsworthy because of his notoriety; however, intimidating a Black person for living in the county was part of a trend that was consistent within Bergen County towns in the 1930s.

[110] "K.K.K. Warning Orders Jack Johnson From NJ," *New York Herald Tribune* (New York, NY), June 27, 1934, accessed June 10, 2023. Box 1 Folder 37 Bernard Baruch Collection Rutgers University.

The Second Coming of the KKK:

On July 11, 1934, *The Bergen Evening Record* reported a Ku Klux Klan cross burning in the Bergen County town of Teaneck to protest a Black family, named Young, moving into town.[111] The family was verbally harassed and confronted by the hostile people in the neighborhood. When a group came to the Young house in protest, Gerald Young threatened to call the cops. One of the protestors pulled out a badge and said "'I'm a policeman, and we don't want the likes of you around here.'"[112] In reality, the man was a fireman. When asked why he did not go to the police, Gerald Young said "'There's no police in Teaneck for us people.'"[113] The article concludes by referencing another cross burning by the Klan that was held the prior month; two cops stood guard and did not intervene.[114] On October 3, 1935, *The Bergen Evening Record* reported in a headline the hostility met by one Black family trying to move into the town of Hackensack, the county seat of Bergen County: "Blazing Cross is a Warning to Negro Family."[115] The article indicated that members of the Ku Klux Klan burned a cross within a block of where Black families had recently moved. "The blazing cross attracted comparatively little attention. Only a handful of persons living in the vicinity came out to see the fires. Five Hackensack policemen watched the ceremony but did not interfere."[116] The image of the burning cross confronted any reader who made his/her way to the eleventh page of the

[111] "Police Fail to Act As K.K.K. Threatens Negros," *The Bergen Evening Record* (Hackensack, NJ), July 11, 1934, 1, accessed April 1, 2023, https://www.newspapers.com/.

[112] "Police Fail," 1.

[113] "Police Fail," 1.

[114] "Police Fail," 1.

[115] "Blazing Cross Is Klan's Warning to Negro Family," *The Bergen Evening Record* (Hackensack, NJ), October 3, 1935, 2, 11, accessed April 1, 2023, https://www.newspapers.com/.

[116] "Blazing Cross," 11.

newspaper. Foreign affairs updates got the bigger headlines in the paper on that October morning.[117] Maintaining racial homogeneity in Bergen County was done through racial fear provoked by the rebirth of the Ku Klux Klan and by federal housing policies that initially resisted racial integration.

While the Ku Klux Klan was born out of the aftermath of the Civil War, the rebirth of the Klan came a generation later and reemerged looking somewhat similar to its original organization with some new targets. It is an American tradition to associate racism with the South, and for good reason. However, racial oppression, violence, and segregation have a long history in the North. Young children grow up hearing about slaves escaping to the North as if it were some bastion of equality and egalitarianism. To associate racism with the South and the former Confederate States is not inaccurate; however, to neglect the racism that existed, and persists, in the North is an incomplete truth with dangerous consequences. There are stark differences between the North and the South in terms of race relations. Slaves *did* escape to the North and the Great Migration *did* pull Black Americans out of the deeply segregated South and into the hope of a freer North. When white residents of Bergen County resisted an all-Black CCC Camp in their communities a broader story of race in the region begins to emerge.

An evaluation of racial segregation laws, along with racial intimidation perpetrated by groups like the KKK in Bergen County, offers context to the resistance of Black CCC enrollees. Documentation of Klan activity in Bergen County is not easy to come across. The extent of the organization's activity in the area can be discerned from old newspaper articles. On July 23, 1923, *The New York Times* reported that a Klan initiation ceremony was broadly attended in Hackensack: "Deputy Sheriff Joseph P.

[117] "Blazing Cross," 11.

Winters, who lives in Paramusboro, brought word to Hackensack this morning of the initiation of 652 candidates of the Ku Klux Klan in a midnight ceremony in the woods near his home;" there were more than 2,000 people in attendance from neighboring counties.[118] This initiation meeting was accompanied by a procession in which a fiery cross led the way.[119]

The Second Coming of the Ku Klux Klan was prompted by the release of the film, *The Birth of a Nation*, in 1915. Historians Joseph G. Bilby and Harry Ziegler's book *The Rise and Fall of the Ku Klux Klan in New Jersey*, explains the film as "a faux-history" that vilified northern, "thieving Yankee 'carpetbaggers'" and praised the KKK for its heroism in fighting for the fabricated and romanticized "lost cause" concept of the Confederacy.[120] The lost cause concept put forward the tortured argument that the South fought a noble war and it led to the justification of post-war racial oppression. The success of the film was nationwide. In New Jersey, a headline in *The Press of Atlantic City* read "Is Greatest Play The Birth of a Nation?" It went on to laud the director, D.W. Griffith, for carrying "the magnificent story from the introduction of African slavery right down through Civil War and Reconstruction days to the final real union of South and North in the bonds of love and peace."[121] Racial tensions in the United States hit another high point after WWI; Black American soldiers had fought in the trenches against the Germans. Identifying the hypocrisy of fighting a war to promote worldwide democracy

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[118] "Klan Initiates," *The New York Times* (New York, NY), July 24, 1923, 23.

[119] "Klan Initiates," 23.

[120] Joseph G. Bilby and Harry F. Ziegler, *The Rise and Fall of the Ku Klux Klan in New Jersey* (Charleston, SC: History Press., 2019), 13.

[121] "Is Greatest Play the Birth of a Nation?," *Press of Atlantic City* (Atlantic City, NJ), August 23, 1915, 11, accessed May 27, 2023, https://www.newspapers.com/.

while being segregated at home, these men sought to improve their lot in life in their American homeland. Race riots broke out across the United States, including the North. Happening concurrently to this was an increased fear of foreign-born anarchists and communists, climaxing with the country's First Red Scare and the abrupt mass deportation of foreign-born people by Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer.[122] The Klan presented itself as a patriotic entity to fight against a changing society.

New Jersey was a state that was becoming increasingly diverse with Southern and Eastern European immigrants as well as African American migrants from the South, both groups being the main target of the revitalized Klan. Although there was a Klan presence in the Garden State, "In New Jersey there was (thankfully) no Klan-related violent vigilantism, lynching or collusion with political or law enforcement personnel, although intimidation was often used as a tool."[123]

Active recruitment went on by the KKK in New Jersey throughout the 1920s. "New Jersey was a center for activities in the Northeast, and Bergen County had more than its share of hooded Klansman parades and cross burnings. Intimidation was their most vicious weapon."[124] Recruitment had greater reception in the rural parts of the state, especially those transitioning to more suburban areas and "experiencing an influx of Catholic and Jewish immigrants."[125] By the end of the 1920s, scandals within the

[122] Bilby and Ziegler, *The Rise*, 18.

[123] Bilby and Ziegler, *The Rise*, 12.

[124] Fogarty, O'Connor, and Cummings, *Bergen County*, 135.

[125] Bilby and Ziegler, *The Rise*, 27.

organization on the state and national level had led to the decline of the KKK both in New Jersey and throughout the country.[126]

The Klan had ample recruitment in Bergen County. *The Bergen Evening Record* reported on April 1, 1930, that "efforts to increase interest in the Ku Klux Klan among its South Bergen members were successful at a meeting."[127] As a result of an effort to reinvigorate the Rutherford Klan, "the gathering was one of the largest ever held at Rutherford Junior Order Hall."[128] As the nation entered into a new decade, the Klan praised the tactics perpetrated by the Nazis against the Jews. By the late 1930s, the New Jersey Klan aligned itself with the German-American Bund, an American Neo-Nazi organization; this union culminated in a joint rally in August 1940, near Andover, New Jersey. There was fierce opposition to the Bund in New Jersey, prompting anti-Nazi organizations to denounce the event. Local townsfolk protested the Bund and the federal government began a formal investigation into fascist affiliations and the KKK through the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC).[129] As the nation entered war, the collective calls for unity conflicted with the Klan's divisive language; Imperial Wizard James Colescott disbanded the organization in 1944.[130] In 1946, New Jersey outlawed the Klan as an organization in the state when the state's attorney general revoked its 1923 incorporation papers.[131] Despite the formal dissolution of the second iteration of the Klan,

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[126] Bilby and Ziegler, *The Rise*, 123.

[127] "Klan Takes Brace at Session at Jr. Order," *The Bergen Evening Record* (Hackensack, NJ), April 1, 1930, 17, accessed May 27, 2023, https://www.newspapers.com/.

[128] "Klan Takes," 17.

[129] Bilby and Ziegler, *The Rise*, 114.

[130] Bilby and Ziegler, *The Rise*, 146.

[131] Bilby and Ziegler, *The Rise*, 146-147.

there were still moments in New Jersey when individuals who claimed KKK affiliation resurfaced in New Jersey, specifically during the Civil Rights Movement. The United Klans of America emerged at this time nationwide, claiming a chapter in New Jersey. "Using a white supremacy slogan, and exploiting sentiment against integration, civil rights measures, and increasing drives for Negro equality, the United Klans of America established state organizations in" 19 states, including New Jersey, as reported by the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1967.[132]

During the Klan's heyday in the state of New Jersey, its activities were not explicitly violent in the way that was typical in former Confederate states. The New Jersey Klansman was more prone to "melodramatic and intimidating acts of cross burning."[133] However, this should not downplay the horror that such intimidation practices wielded against both religiously and racially diverse people in New Jersey and in Bergen County. In opposition to the rhetoric and actions of the KKK, there were many people in New Jersey who opposed the organization. Though it had inconsistent support throughout the state, the KKK in New Jersey still was a presence and a threat to Black communities.

The presence of the Klan in small-town New Jersey was consistent with Klan activity in the United States in the 1920s. According to historian David M. Chalmers's book *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan*, the Klan's first strongholds in New Jersey were in Passaic, Bergen Essex, Union, and Morris counties.[134] Although

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[132] The Present-Day Ku Klux Klan Movement, H.R. Rep. No. Ninetieth-377, First Session (1967). Accessed August 2, 2023. https://li.proquest.com/elhpdf/histcontext/12808-7-H.doc.377.pdf.

[133] Bilby and Ziegler, *The Rise*, 155.

[134] David Mark Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan*, 3rd ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987), 243.

the Klan had bases in cities like Newark and Jersey City, "it soon learned that closely built-up residential towns provided a more stable base."[135] The Klan "felt most at home in Monmouth County."[136] The purpose of the Klan was to, in their interpretation, "protect the Constitution and pure womanhood, maintain white supremacy, and the separation of Church and State, and uphold law and order."[137] However, from the beginning of their formal entry to the Garden State, "the Klan faced overt opposition."[138] Chalmers asserts that by the end of the 1920s, New Jersey was not quite ready for the Klan; however, an evaluation of newspaper articles from the 1930s tells a slightly different story. The story of race and the CCC in Bergen County shows two reactions. There was fierce opposition to a Black camp but there were also those who recognized this injustice. Moreover, the opposition that came with the introduction of the Black campers waned as time went by. "Only the American South provides fertile soil for the Klan seed. Whatever their impact in the 1920s, memory of the Klan does not linger in other parts of the country," states David Chalmers.[139] This is true; the memory of the Klan does not linger in North Jersey in textbooks or books or within the small towns of Bergen County. But its presence *did* exist and its existence should be exposed for the role it played in traumatizing Black and immigrant communities.

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[135] Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 243.

[136] Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 243

[137] Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 244.

[138] Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 250.

[139] Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 428.

The Great Depression, the CCC, and African Americans:

The trauma of the Great Depression was far-reaching. The African American community was particularly struck by the hardship of policies, practices, and customs of discrimination and segregation imposed by the federal and local governments. The resentment Black corpsmen experienced in Bergen County was similar to what they experienced around the country. CCC historian Olen Cole Jr. attributes the consistent presence of racial discrimination in the *Civilian Conservation Corps* to three factors: the racist attitude of the Army, Robert Fechner's Southern roots, "along with the usual racial fears."[140] By 1935, it became the official policy of the agency to completely segregate the camps between white and Black enrollees. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the original legislation had ambiguous interpretations about not discriminating based on race. Fechner did not believe that segregation and discrimination were mutually exclusive; segregation did not mean discrimination, it simply meant equal yet separate opportunity. Cole quotes a policy written by Robert Fechner that stated "'complete segregation of the white and colored enrollees is directed. Only in those states where the colored strengths are too low to form a company unit will mixing of colored men in white units be permitted.'"[141] Historian Nancy Jones Weiss states the following:

> Contrary to the intent of the legislation creating the Corps, the director of the CCC, Robert Fechner, himself a conservative Southerner, pushed increasingly for rigid segregation and the explicit limitations on Black enrollment- a decision in which President Roosevelt concurred.[142]

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[140] Olen Cole, *The African-American Experience in the Civilian Conservation Corps* (n.p.: University Press of Florida, 1999), 26.

[141] Cole, *African-American Experience*, 26.

[142] Nancy J. Weiss, *Farewell to the Party of Lincoln: Black Politics in the Age of FDR* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983), 54.

The resistance to an all-Black camp in Bergen County demonstrates a glaring attribute that existed in the region. White Bergen County residents fiercely resented integrating their mostly-white communities with Black people. The introduction of the CCC led to this confrontation and the outcome of the massive resistance offers a rare glimpse into how Bergen County residents in general viewed integrating their communities. Historical newspapers offer a glimpse into this resistance and its outcome.

The CCC and Bergen County:

The first New Jersey camps were set up in May 1933. William J. Ellis was selected as the New Jersey State Director of Selection for the *Civilian Conservation Corps*. According to Ellis's report written in 1936, "The type of young man who is wanted to fill the ranks in the CCC camps is the man of character, purpose, and stability, with a sense of obligation to his family. He should be willing to work, to learn, and to abide by the civil discipline of the camp."[143] The Bergen County experience with the CCC was not only at camps within Bergen County. Boys from that county were scattered around the country from Washington to Idaho and Nevada. The nationwide establishment of camps brought Bergen County boys away from home, and for most of them, it was their first time out of state. William Cenicola of Hackensack wrote a letter home to his parents from his CCC station outside of Spokane, Washington in the small town of Cusick: "I used to think Hackensack is a lonely place, but this place has it beaten by a mile."[144] The young man told his parents about the journey west through the Rocky

[143] New Jersey Department Institutions and Agencies, Procedure for Selection of Men for the Civilian Conservation Corps, (N.J. 1936). https://dspace.njstatelib.org/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10929/27345/n2841936.pdf?sequence=1.

[144] "Youth Writes of CCC Life," *The Bergen Evening Record* (Hackensack, NJ), July 15, 1933, 4, accessed March 26, 2023, https://www.newspapers.com/.

Mountains and the Blackfoot Indian Reservation.[145] A group of fifteen Fort Lee young men made their way to distant Idaho, calling it the "wild west," reported *The Bergen Evening Record*, and quite a change from their New Jersey home.[146] One corpsman wrote: "Having a fine time here in the northern woods, but get lonesome sometime and get feeling to be back East."[147]

Bergen County during the Depression has to be analyzed in the context of the time. According to a report from 1930, Bergen County had a population of 364,977 people, and only 2.4% of that population was Black.[148] Black New Jerseyans suffered more than any other racial or ethnic groups during the Depression. Moreover, Black unemployment was two times greater than white unemployment in the state. It was harder for them to find jobs which led to greater rates of poverty.[149] Bergen County had a very small population of Black residents, and this case study will reveal that the intention of many was to keep it that way. The rise of the Ku Klux Klan in the country and its presence in Bergen County was a telling marker of both xenophobia and racism. Parades were held and measures were taken throughout the county in the 1920s and into the 1930s to intimidate newcomers.[150]

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[145] "Youth Writes," 4.

[146] "Forestry Recruits Tell of Life in Idaho Camp," *The Bergen Evening Record* (Hackensack, NJ), July 11, 1933, 4, accessed March 26, 2023, https://www.newspapers.com/.

[147] "Forestry Recruits," 4.

[148] Giles R. Wright, *Afro-Americans in New Jersey: A Short History* (Trenton, NJ: New Jersey Historical Commission, 1988), 93. https://nj.gov/state/historical/assets/pdf/topical/afro-americans-in-nj-short-history.pdf.

[149] Wright, *Afro-Americans in New Jersey*, 63.

[150] Catharine M. Fogarty, John E. O'Connor, and Charles F. Cummings, *Bergen County: A Pictorial History* (Norfolk, VA: Donning Company, 1985), 135.

Race and Housing in Bergen County:

A conventional belief is that the North and the South are different on the basis of *how* housing segregation was implemented: *de facto* vs. *de jure* segregation. According to Richard Rothstein's book, *The Color of Law*, segregation as seen in the North has been considered *de facto* segregation. *De facto* segregation is the "result of private practices, not from law or government practices."[151] This is in contrast to *de jure* segregation, which is based on laws and public policy, like Jim Crow Laws; in this sense, *de jure* segregation is more overt, explicit, and direct. It is a practice more generally associated with the South.[152] While the distinction between the two is important, to ignore laws that also led to segregation in the North and to define it only through the lens of *de facto* segregation is to absolve the government of responsibility when it comes to the racially segregated North. While the racial homogeneity in the 1930s of counties like Bergen County was the product of those who settled there over the years, the reluctance of the communities to integrate was deliberate and not coincidental. Over time, racial segregation in the North became codified into law.

One way that the federal government's laws and policies impacted homeownership and race in the country was through the creation of both the New Deal's *Home Owners' Loan Corporation* (HOLC) and the *Federal Housing Administration* (FHA). Amid the Great Depression, the HOLC aimed to stop the foreclosure crisis followed by the FHA which offered banks a means of insurance by the federal government if a loan was unpaid. With the unemployment of the Great Depression came

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[151] Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, a division of W.W. Norton & Company, 2018), vii.

[152] Rothstein, *The Color*, viii.

an inability to pay off mortgages. As a protection against this, the Roosevelt administration created HOLC in 1933. The HOLC purchased *existing* mortgages that were on the verge of foreclosure; it then offered new mortgages and created a 15-year payment schedule to repay the loan (later extended to 25 years). For fear that the borrower would default on his/her scheduled payments, the HOLC had a vested interest in the borrower's ability to pay it back. When assessing risk factors for making loans, the HOLC "considered the racial composition of neighborhoods."[153] The HOLC created color-coded maps to identify risk factors when offering loans: "A neighborhood earned a red color if African Americans lived in it, even if it was a solidly middle-class neighborhood of single-family homes."[154] Thus, a Black neighborhood color-coded red, based solely on the factor of race, was considered a high-risk investment.

The HOLC was followed the next year by the FHA of 1934, which intervened in the housing sector by creating a government entity that would provide insurance to lending banks against any financial loss on loans made in home purchasing. Providing insurance to private lenders was a key way the government tried to stabilize the housing market and ensure people had access to mortgages. It assured that lenders would feel safe in their lending process. If the borrower was unable to pay back the bank for the mortgage, the FHA would pay the bank, thus taking the fear and risk of default away from the lending bank. Because the FHA was inserting itself into the home buying process and acting as an insuring agency, it was able to also dictate some of the terms of securing the loans. According to historian John Kimble, "During the first three decades of

[153] Rothstein, *The Color*, 64.

[154] Rothstein, *The Color*, 64.

its existence, the agency strategically exploited this position to the benefit of white homeowners at the expense of African Americans."[155] The FHA determined that race was an indicator of the region's desirability and value, a key factor in home lending. Black families were considered risky investments. This conclusion was based on the FHA's chief economic analyst Homer Hoyt's research and concluding formula for real estate development. In a more than 200-page report called "The Structure and Growth of Residential Neighborhoods in America," Hoyt concluded that the segregation of races based on housing was a necessity:

> …the reflection of adverse housing characteristics in rent should tend to operate in the same manner in areas populated entirely by colored races as in areas populated only by whites. It is in the twilight zone, where members of different races live together that racial mixtures tend to have a depressing effect upon land values and therefore, upon rents.[156]

His conclusions regarding race, segregation, and home value would play a detrimental role in Black Americans' aspirations for home ownership, a major and long-term factor in growing generational wealth in America and a policy that would lead to the practice of redlining throughout the country. There was no effort to verify such findings about the decline in property values and race.

The HOLC maps of 1933 include Bergen County with many indications that changing demographics were seen as threatening to community development, especially regarding the influx of immigrants, Black people, and Jews. The maps were color-coded based on the grading of the neighborhood. Three percent of Bergen County was colored

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[155] John Kimble, "Insuring Inequality: The Role of the Federal Housing Administration in the Urban Ghettoization of African Americans," *Law and Social Inquiry* 32, no. 2 (2007): 403, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20108708.

[156] *The Structure and Growth of Residential Neighborhoods in American Cities* (Government Publishing Office, 1939), 62, https://ia800503.us.archive.org/30/items/structuregrowtho00unitrich/structuregrowtho00unitrich.pdf.

green, areas that were considered Grade A or "Best." Twenty-nine percent of the county was colored blue, areas that were considered Grade B or "Still Desirable." Fifty-six percent of the county was colored yellow, areas that were considered Grade C or "Definitely Declining." Eleven percent of the county was colored red, areas that were considered Grade D or "Hazardous."[157] The maps were accompanied by an explanation of the gradation. Terms like "negro invasion" and "Jewish infiltration" were written throughout the HOLC evaluations. Each area that was color-coded had an accompanying description of the demographic inhabiting the area, indicating the percentage of people from foreign countries and the country of their origin. If there was a "shifting infiltration" it was to be noted, along with the percentage of the population that was "negro."[158] The class and occupation along with the types of buildings in the region were reported. Nestled on the outskirts of the marshlands of north Jersey, west of the Hackensack River, lay the small boroughs of Teterboro and Hasbrouck Heights, the primary focus of this study. The continuity of a predominantly white Hasbrouck Heights was contributed to by agencies such as the HOLC and FHA.

Parts of Hasbrouck Heights were coded yellow, while others were coded blue. Few details were provided regarding any demographic changes. The description highlighted the accessibility to New York City via mass transportation. Moreover, the racial demographic had no indication of diversity. There was no "shifting infiltration," no "negro" population, and no people who were foreign-born. Neighboring Teterboro was

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[157] University of Richmond, "Bergen County," Mapping Inequality: Redlining in New Deal America, accessed May 28, 2023, https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/#loc=1/41.245/-105.469&text=intro.

[158] University of Richmond, "Bergen County," Mapping Inequality: Redlining in New Deal America.

colored a downgraded yellow with 50% of the population being Italian. The area was poorly planned and near the marshlands of the Meadowlands: "No churches in area. No schools. Many unpaved streets and few sidewalks. Poor planning, poor layout, parts not sewered."[159] The town directly next to Hasbrouck Heights, Lodi, was considered "generally the worst section of Bergen County. Residentially, occupied almost entirely by foreign laboring class."[160]

Nearby, the town of Hackensack had neighborhoods representing mixed grades. The downgraded red areas show a large percentage of the foreign or Black population. It can therefore be concluded that on the eve of the CCC's arrival in Teterboro, the adjacent town of Hasbrouck Heights had no notable diversity, whereas the areas of nearby Hackensack that had Black and foreign-born residents were considered hazardous and a bad investment for bank lenders. The arrival of Black employees with the *Civilian Conservation Corps* would certainly change the racial makeup of the Teterboro and Hasbrouck Heights communities.

The CCC in Teterboro:

While the *Civilian Conservation Corps* would be established in Teterboro, it was originally named "Camp Hasbrouck Heights." The two towns lay adjacent to one another and the camp name was an indication of the closest railroad and post office.[161] The story of the treatment of Black workers in the 1930s must be contextualized by understanding

[159] University of Richmond, "Bergen County," Mapping Inequality: Redlining in New Deal America.

[160] University of Richmond, "Bergen County," Mapping Inequality: Redlining in New Deal America.

[161] Kathleen Duxbury, *The Boys of Bergen: Remembering the Civilian Conservation Corps Bergen County, New Jersey* (Ridgewood: Duxbury Media, 2012), 47.

how the region developed over the centuries and years leading up to the Great Depression. While the land of New Jersey was historically the land of the Lenape Indians, it was settled by the Dutch and then later by the English. Captain John Berry was a 17th-century English colonist who moved from Barbados to the region and became an early landowner who contributed to the growth and development of the region.[162] The area is historically notable as a region where General Washington marched his troops as they retreated from Hackensack. It exists in the shadows of New York City's ever-growing skyscrapers and around the marshlands of the Meadowlands. The region grew in population and development over time and much of its expansion was due to the railroad line that linked Bergen County to Hudson County in the latter half of the 19th century. From Hudson County, commuters and day trippers could easily access New York City. When the railroad began service, it brought people from Manhattan to live in the communities along the Hudson River. The people of Southern Bergen County depended on New York as a place to work but enjoyed a quiet town to which they could come home. And so the region grew as a suburb of the country's largest city.

According to local Hasbrouck Heights historians Jody Falco and Stephen McNabb, in their 1979 book published by the Hasbrouck Heights Library, despite a spirit of change and reform that existed at the turn of the 20th century, "by no means was it a unanimous decision of the townspeople to go headlong into the progressiveness of the time."[163] Falco and McNabb also reflected on how the townsfolk generally felt toward religious and racial change entering their community:

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[162] Jody Falco and Stephen McNabb, *Hasbrouck Heights: A History* (Hasbrouck Heights, NJ: Free Public Library of Hasbrouck Heights, 1979), 3.

[163] Falco and McNabb, *Hasbrouck Heights*, 13.

> It must be remembered that the residents of Hasbrouck Heights were generally susceptible to the ambivalent feeling toward imminent progress felt by most Americans. They also felt the need to cling to the past, as many people today gain comfort in remembering the good old days. Most importantly, people in towns like Hasbrouck Heights in 1894 felt a genuine unity of community. Sometimes the ugly side of such feelings showed, as when political candidates were questioned about their religious association, or when 'darkies' and Jews could be a source of merriment at a municipal event, or when a murder could be dealt with almost off-handedly because both the victims and the suspect were Italians from another town. Fear of strangers and the belief that Americans possessed a certain superiority over all others caused this attitude in part. Americans at the turn of the century were for the most part provincials who feared the loss of innocence that was fast approaching.[164]

Falco and McNabb describe Hasbrouck Heights as a "cohesive community."[165] "Coziness and prosperity prevailed until 1929 when the crash hit America and the Depression visited even the most protected of communities."[166] In the first years of the Great Depression, Herbert Hoover avoided federal relief. "This was the conservative and traditionally Republican approach. Such an approach appealed to a community like Hasbrouck Heights."[167] Fifty-two percent of the county voted in 1932 for Herbert Hoover, a stamp of approval for his approach to the financial crisis.[168] However, it should be noted that in 1928, Hoover received sixty-three percent of the vote from Bergen County voters, so his approval, despite being larger than Roosevelt's, *was* trending down. With the election of FDR, would come an effort for unemployment relief. Hasbrouck Height's

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[164] Falco and McNabb, *Hasbrouck Heights*, 57.

[165] Falco and McNabb, *Hasbrouck Heights*, 86.

[166] Falco and McNabb, *Hasbrouck Heights*, 98.

[167] Falco and McNabb, *Hasbrouck Heights*, 100.

[168] Department of State, State of New Jersey: Result of the General Election, (N.J. Nov. 8, 1932). Accessed May 28, 2023. https://www.state.nj.us/state/elections/assets/pdf/election-results/1920-1970//1932-general-election.pdf.

neighbor, the small borough of Teterboro, would become the home of a new CCC camp and work opportunity.

In 1935, the CCC decided to sponsor a project at Teterboro to combat pesky mosquitoes, a residual effect of the area's proximity to the Meadowlands.[169] From autumn 1935 to autumn 1938, various camp companies and enrollees would make Teterboro their home-away-from-home to be part of the New Deal's conservation army. The first camp company began working at the Teterboro location on October 25, 1935, and the last company ended on October 28, 1938. In total, three companies would occupy the same location. After closure in 1938, the barracks would be used by another New Deal agency named the National Youth Association (NYA). The project number for Teterboro's CCC site was MC-79, indicating the work being done for *mosquito control*.

The town of Hasbrouck Heights supported the placement of the camp and in October 1935, there was great anticipation for the enrollee arrivals and the work to be done. The Hasbrouck Heights local town newspaper anticipated the upcoming camp with an article entitled "CCC Camp Work Started in Teterboro: Construction is Begun on Project to House 200 in 2-Year War on Mosquitoes."[170] The anticipated project was mosquito extermination in the Hackensack meadows, covering a six-mile radius and impacting sixteen Bergen County municipalities and one in Hudson County. Enrollment was already underway at the time of the article but there was no indication in the article that the camp would be one of all Black-enrollees. The camp would be known as "Camp Teter."[171] The nature of the work to control the mosquitoes included marsh draining,

[169] Falco and McNabb, *Hasbrouck Heights*, 107.

[170] "CCC Camp Work Started in Teterboro: Construction is Begun on Project to House 200 in 2 Year War on Mosquitoes," *The Observer* (Hasbrouck Heights, NJ), June 14, 1935.

[171] "CCC Camp."

which was intended to prevent mosquito breeding.[172] The program aimed to construct 1,200,000 linear feet (230 miles) of ditches, 20,000 feet of dikes, and ten automatic tide gates. According to *The Bergen Evening Record*, the system would be reflective of the system of dikes and canals in Holland, although on a smaller scale.[173] The only other mosquito-control camp in North Jersey was in Morristown. The camp in Teterboro was to be located next to the Teterboro Airport.[174]

Company 3214-c

Falco and McNabb open up their discussion of the CCC in Teterboro by describing the camp as initially a "town crisis" not a "town improvement," specifically because of the chaos it created due to the race of the enrollees.[175] "Camp Teter was ready for its 800 workers in late September. The work was to take two years. In October, however, the picture changed."[176]

The reference to a *changing picture* refers to the race of the enrollees. *The Bergen Evening Record* confirmed in their October 23, 1935 edition the identity of the camp enrollees. "Army officials at Governor's Island today confirmed rumors that a Negro detachment will arrive at the Teterboro CCC camp Friday morning."[177] Neighboring towns joined the cacophony of fearful protests at the announcement of the all-Black

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[172] "CCC Camp."

[173] "New C.C.C. Unit to Start Fight on Mosquitoes," *The Bergen Evening Record* (Hackensack, NJ), June 7, 1935, 3, accessed February 5, 2023, https://www.newspapers.com/.

[174] "New C.C.C.," 3.

[175] Falco and McNabb, *Hasbrouck Heights*, 107.

[176] Falco and McNabb, *Hasbrouck Heights*, 107.

[177] "Heights Fights Colored Troop," *The Bergen Evening Record* (Hackensack, NJ), October 23, 1935, accessed April 1, 2023, https://www.newspapers.com/.

camp.“Wood-Ridge Moves to Ban Negro from Mosquito Army in Teterboro,” reported the front page of the South Bergen section of *The Herald News*, a neighboring Passaic County publication.[178] Senator William Barbour requested the Army reconsider the placement; he would do “everything possible to have it rescinded.”[179] Borough Clerk Joseph P. Breeze of Hasbrouck Heights said that the fear of the all-Black camp was due to the camp’s proximity to town playgrounds, “‘where contact between the two races will result in disorders of various kinds.’”[180]

As the news of the men’s impending arrival reached townsfolk, action from the community was prompted. The mayor and council, the Women’s Club, and the Lions Club contacted Senator A. Harry Moore, the state governor, and various Washington officials protesting the decision in a desperate attempt to halt the plans. They argued that there was a “detriment” to “importing negroes to the strictly residential Borough with no Negro population.”[181] Despite complaints and protesting, the CCC camp made its way to Teterboro, in Bergen County on October 25th, 1935, when Company number 3214-c (the “c” denoting that the camp was for colored corpsmen) arrived for duty. The conservative and “cozy” towns around the camp were ready to react. When the men arrived for duty, the community members were “none too cordial.”[182]

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[178] "Wood-Ridge Moves to Ban Mosquito Army in Teterboro," *The Herald News* (Passaic, NJ), October 24, 1935, 17, accessed February 5, 2023, https://www.newspapers.com/.

[179] "Wood-Ridge Moves," 17.

[180] "Wood-Ridge Moves," 17.

[181] "185 Negroes In Camp Draw Fire From Officials," *The Bergen Evening Record* (Hackensack, NJ), October 26, 1935, 2, accessed February 5, 2023, https://www.newspapers.com/.

[182] Falco and McNabb, *Hasbrouck Heights*, 107.

Upon arrival, *The Observer*, a local Hasbrouck Heights newspaper, stated that the group of corpsmen, who had arrived via train from Bridgeton N.J., where they had previously been stationed, were "young and happy looking."[183] They followed orders to march to their barracks not too far from the train station. They were dressed in Army pants and shirts and leather jackets, carrying their duffle bags filled with their belongings. The men were given strict orders from Second Lieutenant John C. Wagner, the commanding officer of the camp, not to go into the town of Hasbrouck Heights.[184] The men were from local towns, including Hackensack, Englewood, and Newark. Wagner said upon arrival: "We hope to landscape the camp and make it the show camp of Northern New Jersey…And we hope the residents of Hasbrouck Heights and surrounding towns will welcome us."[185] To assuage any fears of community members, he assured the people of Hasbrouck Heights that the men were "well-behaved."[186] Moreover, the newspaper assured the public that the police department would be on duty to "watch for any infringement of camp rules."[187] To try to endear the campers to the towns, "an entertainment by the men for the people of the town in the near future" was planned so that the townsfolk could realize that the workers are "'not such bad fellows after all,'" stated Wagner.[188] The newspaper indicated that 40 people were waiting for the enrollees upon their arrival, including the police commissioner and some other town officials;

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[183] "Negro Youths Arrive Here; Open Up Camp," *The Observer* (Hasbrouck Heights, NJ), October 25, 1935.

[184] "Negro Youths."

[185] "Negro Youths."

[186] "Negro Youths."

[187] "Negro Youths."

[188] "Negro Youths."

however, there is no indication as to the temperament of the crowd based on what is written in the paper.[189] Perhaps their intentions were varied, ranging from curiosity to attempts to intimidate. Within one day of this publication, *The Bergen Evening Record* indicated continued fears and concerns over the Black corpsmen by the local townsfolk: "185 Negroes In Camp Draw Fire From Officials: Hasbrouck Heights Cops Issue Strict Rules Against Army." Then, in all capitalized lettering, the subtitle read: "OUTBREAK FEARED."[190]

Editorial responses started making some noise in *The Bergen Evening Record.* An editorial from October 25th asked the reader and the residents of Hasbrouck Heights to reconsider their reaction to the all-Black camp. "It is unfortunate that protests were couched in such strong terms, for resentment breeds resentment," the editorial opined.[191] The unnamed writer suggested that the protestors of Hasbrouck Heights "suspend judgment upon the newcomers until they are able to reach a just and rational decision."[192] Two weeks later, C.P. Wilber, the Chief of the Division of Forests and Parks Department of Conservation and Development stationed in Trenton, wrote in response to this editorial, with gratitude and some comments on the challenges of placing the all-Black camps: "Our experience every time we have had to put one of these camps in…has been identical with that of Camp 79."[193] He noted that all-Black camps stationed in South

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[189] "Negro Youths."

[190] "185 Negroes," 2.

[191] "Heights CCC Camp," *The Bergen Evening Record* (Hackensack, NJ), October 25, 1935, Editorials, 36, accessed April 15, 2023, https://www.newspapers.com/.

[192] "Heights CCC," Editorials, 36.

[193] C.P. Wilber, "Colored CCC Camps," *The Bergen Evening Record* (Hackensack, NJ), November 15, 1935, Editorials, 32, accessed February 5, 2023, https://www.newspapers.com/.

Jersey were easier to set up because the camp locations were more remote in the Pine Barrens area of the state. However, he also noted that, in time, the local communities usually learned to accept the enrollees. He offered a comparison to a Camden camp which experienced similar initial hostilities but, in time, "the colored boys are the pets of the community now...despite the fact that their camp is located just across a narrow shallow stream from the children's playground."[194]

Wilber's experience with other camps seems to parallel what was about to happen in Teterboro. The Teterboro camp inspection report from November 1935, made note of the reception of the town towards the enrollees. It indicated overall good morale of the men and "relationship with the community improved and cordial."[195] As the corpsmen became settled in their new home, they began partaking in the usual CCC experience, from work to leisure activities. Men were able to engage in religious and educational services on-site. Classes included public speaking, first aid, dramatics, algebra, citizenship, and English. Clubs included boxing, wrestling, baseball, volleyball, checkers, cards, dances, reading, and aviation.[196]

One enlightened reader wrote a letter to the editor of *The Bergen Evening Record;* the letter lamented the racist antagonisms exhibited in Hackensack and towards the Black CCC workers. The writer saw the response to the Black corpsmen as an affront to "the American ideal of democracy."[197] The concerned citizen was Frederic Morrow. He called

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[194] Wilber, "Colored CCC," Editorials, 32.

[195] "Camp Inspection Report," November 1935, Box #138, Teterboro Camp Report, National Archives, College Park, MD.

[196] "Camp Inspection."

[197] E. Frederic Morrow, "Racial Antagonisms," *The Bergen Evening Record* (Hackensack, NJ), November 1, 1935, Editorials, 36, accessed April 15, 2023, https://www.newspapers.com/.

out organizations like the Lions Club and the Women's Club for leading the protest as a violation of their principles. Morrow was disgusted with the local response: "And what makes the whole thing hideous is that they should appeal to our Congressional Representatives, who are elected by and to represent all the people, to discriminate against a particular group. Genuine irony!"[198] In a poignant statement, Morrow reminded the reader that, in a real war, the Black enrollees "would go to give their lives for the citizens of Hasbrouck Heights along with any others."[199] Astute to the international climate of 1935, Morrow noted that the United States was on the brink of "another World War today."[200] His letter commended a recent article that condemned the KKK in Bergen County in hopes that the paper would continue to call out injustice and hypocrisy.[201]

The rancor that erupted from the announcement of the all-Black CCC camp in Bergen County is part of a broader narrative of the region's fears over racial diversification that is not fully recognized or acknowledged. To come to full terms with the county's racial history requires the unearthing of the role, power, activism, and influence of the Ku Klux Klan and all those who resisted racial integration in their predominantly white communities. However, what can also be inferred from the newspaper articles is that there were many Bergen County residents who disagreed with the backlash and were willing to speak out against the injustice.

When the day came for Company 3214-c to leave, *The Bergen Evening Record's* front page headline read "Negro CCC Unit Leaves Heights; Camp Will Stay." Despite the

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[198] Morrow, "Racial Antagonisms," Editorials, 36.

[199] Morrow, "Racial Antagonisms," Editorials, 36.

[200] Morrow, "Racial Antagonisms," Editorials, 36.

[201] Morrow, "Racial Antagonisms," Editorials, 36.

initial fear and consternation regarding the group of Black enrollees, the sentiment began to change within the community. When camp Company 3214-c was scheduled to leave in January 1936, they left behind "no longer hostile residents of Hasbrouck Heights to welcome a white company."[202] According to the newspaper, the reason for the move was "part of a move to cut the number of CCC Camps in New Jersey."[203] The company was replaced with Company SP-11 from Englewood, NJ. The article recalled the hostile backlash against the initial assignment of an all-Black troop but said the behavior was "reversed when the model behavior of the men became evident."[204] The men stayed out of the town of Hasbrouck Heights and away from the unnerved townsfolk. In the three months of the camp, no complaints were filed about the men. The job of this initial company had little to do with mosquito control and more to do with finalizing the construction of the camp, making way for the new company to begin the mosquito extermination under the direction of the Bergen County Mosquito Extermination Commission.[205]

What the hostility towards the Black enrollees revealed about the people of the area and their attitudes regarding race were not lost on all its residents. It became an opportunity for acclaimed news journalist William A. Caldwell to respond to his disappointments towards the white community. Caldwell used his column *Simeon Stylites* in *The Bergen Evening Record* to apologize for the treatment that the Black enrollees experienced. He also attacked the racist attitudes of his contemporaries in Bergen County.

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[202] "Negro CCC Unit Leaves Heights; Camp Will Stay," *The Bergen Evening Record* (Hackensack, NJ), January 6, 1936, Front Page, 1, accessed April 16, 2023, https://www.newspapers.com/.

[203] "Negro CCC," Front Page, 1.

[204] "Negro CCC," Front Page, 1.

[205] "Negro CCC," Front Page, 1.

He lambasted the community leaders who spearheaded the protests against the enrollees and praised the federal government for having "the utter decency absolutely to ignore them."[206] He directed the latter half of his comments to the members of Company 3214-c: "Whether Hasbrouck Heights knows it or not, we're sorry to see you go, boys." He called the "Negro boys" the "best neighbors the town could have asked for."[207]

Company 1271:

As the Black corpsmen exited the site, a new camp company entered. There was no fanfare mentioned in the newspapers about the new group of enrollees entering the town. In January 1936, the new camp of white men, Company 1271, began their CCC jobs in Teterboro. As to why the camp was not replaced with another Black group of enrollees is up for conjecture. The third and final camp company to inhabit Teterboro *would* be another Black company unit. Understanding the *Civilian Conservation Corps* through the lens of the young men of Company 1271 is a glimpse into the intended body politic of the New Deal. By April of that year, the camp would begin publication of their company newspaper, *The Mosquito Dispatch*, offering the reader a unique lens into the lives, activities, and thoughts of the men involved. The articles in the newspaper have a range of topics but they are largely positive and optimistic about camp life. The intention appears to be to celebrate the CCC, its leaders, and its workers. There never was a moment of critique or negative editorializing of any aspect of camp life. Thus the

[206] William A. Caldwell, Simeon Stylites, *The Bergen Evening Record* (Hackensack, NJ), January 8, 1936, Editorials, 24, accessed April 15, 2023, https://www.newspapers.com/.

[207] Caldwell, Editorials, 24.

resource is not objective; however, it is the best option a twenty-first century reader has for reflection on the camp.

Within the newspaper, there are biographies written about camp leaders, explanations of opportunities offered to campers in the fields of sports and education, and updates on the work done in mosquito eradication. Almost every page has a visual component of artwork drawn by an enrollee. There tend to be general themes present including hard work, patriotism, and exploring opportunities within the CCC. The monthly publication offered humor, entertainment, and information for the readers. The newspaper paid tribute and bid farewell to enrollees leaving camp in the section called "Obituary." As the intended audience was the campers, the newspaper spoke to the young men with words of encouragement and general information and insight. There was optimism about the camp and camp life: "No greater opportunity has ever been offered any group of men, to cooperate, than that which is prevalent here at Teterboro," wrote one worker.[208] Another camper wrote in a poem: "You couldn't find a better camp,/ no matter where you roam. /Be glad that you are in it/ Consider it your home."[209] Writers consistently offered gratitude for the opportunities the CCC presented to them with both long and short-term benefits: "We are favored with an excellent educational department and any member can share a sufficient education which will help them in acquiring an outside position if he wants."[210] Embedded within the text and drawings and written between the lines of *The Mosquito Dispatch* was a celebration of American masculinity. There was constant encouragement for the men to seek opportunities and build up their

[208] "Opportunity," *The Mosquito Dispatch* (Hasbrouck Heights, NJ), August 1936, 4.

[209] "How Come," *The Mosquito Dispatch* (Hasbrouck Heights, NJ), August 1936, 7.

[210] "What the CCC Should Do for You," *The Mosquito Dispatch* (Hasbrouck Heights, NJ), November 1936, 3.

capacities both physically and intellectually: “Here you automatically build up your body. In your spare time build up that greater part of you, your brain.”[211]

The story of the men becomes more humanized to the reader through their telling. The story of Company 1271 began in Camp Dix, NJ, on June 2, 1933. The company was moved out to Spokane, Washington, before returning to New Jersey to Camp SP-11 Greenbrook, Englewood, NJ on October 30, 1933, where it would remain until January 1936 when it moved to the site at Teterboro, NJ.[212] The nature of the work being done was not regularly mentioned by *The Mosquito Dispatch* in detail. The newspaper seems to focus more on leisure and entertainment instead of work. Presumably, this is because it was more entertaining for the men to read about the various activities and sports events at the camp than the mosquito control work. However, in October 1936, an article entitled *The Work of the Mosquito Control Men* does offer the reader this insight. The detail of the work description gives a glimpse into the extensive work done by the men. The work is described as tedious and difficult “under the most trying conditions.”[213] There were three methods of mosquito control being used: oilage, drainage, and the construction of tidegates. The oiling crew would carry a tank on his back with five gallons of oil or larvicide. They would spray a thin film of the liquid onto the brooks, streams, ponds, and other areas of stagnant water where mosquitoes were bound to breed. The liquid would suffocate the mosquito. The greatest challenge was getting to the stagnant water which was often buried behind weeds and brush. The second operation was digging ditches that

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[211] J. Kutner, "Life and Living," *The Mosquito Dispatch* (Hasbrouck Heights, NJ), August 1936, 2.

[212] "History of Company 1271," *The Mosquito Dispatch* (Hasbrouck Heights, NJ), April 1936, 5.

[213] "The Work of the Mosquito Control Men," *The Mosquito Dispatch* (Hasbrouck Heights, NJ), October 1936, 6.

would then drain the marshes. The intended outcome was for the mosquitoes in the stagnant water to be carried away via the ditches. The article said that this was a "complicated form of labor that calls for much intelligence."[214] It required the surveying of the land and special tools used for digging. The construction of tidegates was called "the most complicated and yet most interesting project in mosquito control."[215] A tidegate, a heavy large box made out of timber, would be used to "check the flow of the water" and operate to keep "the lowlands free from stagnant water" so that the mosquito eggs would not hatch."[216]

The Bergen Evening Record included a long article on the nature of mosquito removal on March 19, 1936: "It Still Goes On: From Antiquity Men Have Fought the Perennial Mosquito Menace" the title read.[217] It chronicled the long history of man fighting against mosquitoes, dating back to Ancient Egypt and Persia. The purpose of the article was to highlight the work being done in Bergen County, including the Meadowlands, to combat mosquitoes. In the Meadowlands, the CCC men worked seven-and-a-half hours a day in seven crews of fifteen men. It was said that, despite the difficult conditions, most of the men worked hard and did not complain.[218] The particular challenge posed by the Meadowlands mosquitoes was the saltiness of the water. "The

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[214] "The Work," 6.

[215] "The Work," 6.

[216] "The Work," 6.

[217] G. Ralph Kiel, "It Still Goes On: From Antiquity Men Have Fought the Perennial Mosquito Menace," *The Bergen Evening Record* (Hackensack, NJ), March 19, 1936, 5, accessed April 29, 2023, https://www.newspapers.com/.

[218] Kiel, "It Still," 5.

battle of the meadows is particularly important because the salt-marsh mosquito breeds in enormous numbers, and because they have a flight range of from 10 to 40 miles."[219]

An article from the July 1936 edition of *The Mosquito Dispatch* offers a twenty-first century reader a glimpse into what camp life was like 90 years ago. The article, entitled *There's Nothing Wrong with 1271*, praised the camp for the opportunities offered to the enrollees. The mess hall was described as having "a lot of fine equipment which many other camps lack."[220] Other advantages included the distance to New York City, Paterson, Hackensack, Englewood, and other large towns. The camp, unlike others located in remote national parks, was not isolated or lonely. Ample entertainment was offered to the campers around Bergen County. The educational advisor, Mr. Silvio Tursi was "congratulated upon his active programs, with four out of five evenings occupied by several forms of educational and athletic activities."[221]

Sports were a predominant part of camp life in Teterboro Company 1271 and a key component of the boys' extracurricular experience. The *Mosquito Dispatch* encouraged the enrollees to join sports for their many benefits: "It is up to you to take advantage of the healthful benefits and interests that athletic competition can give. So if you have been sitting by content to watch the sports go by, take a little fling and get into something."[222] The softball league was opened on June 9th, 1936 with each barrack entering a team. Volleyball, basketball, and boxing were amongst the other sports

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[219] Kiel, "It Still," 5.

[220] A. Patino, "There's Nothing Wrong with 1271," *The Mosquito Dispatch* (Hasbrouck Heights, NJ), July 1936, 5.

[221] Patino, "There's Nothing," 5.

[222] "Editorial," *The Mosquito Dispatch* (Hasbrouck Heights, NJ), August 1936, 8.

identified in *The Mosquito Dispatch.* The camp had a WPA recreation department boxing instructor, Mr. James Gibbons, visiting the camp from the broader community "nearly every night getting the men in shape."[223] The men competed against other CCC camps in areas like Orange, High Point, Englewood, Branchville, and Oak Ridge New Jersey.[224] A major boxing tournament called the Diamond Gloves was hosted by *The Bergen Evening Record* in August 1936. *The Bergen Evening Record* reported that "the tournament is enlivened this year by the fighting soldiers of the Teterboro CCC camp."[225] But the purpose of boxing was not for the sake of making "pugilist[s] of great fame. Boxing in the camp is only for the purpose of instructing the men in the manly art of self-defense."[226] Dances were also commonplace for the enrollees with music often supplied by a WPA orchestra. By the October 1936 edition of *The Mosquito Dispatch*, the camp was hosting a group of WPA employees who would offer courses in the arts including drama, photography, and industrial arts. On July 29, a clambake followed by games of tug-of-war and softball were sponsored by Company 1271. The enrollees also attended various plays and pageants, often being entertained by local WPA troops off campus in neighboring towns.[227]

Education played a primary purpose in the camp. Arithmetic, English, spelling, radio, auto-mechanics, journalism, photography, typewriting, sign painting, drawing,

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[223] "Boxing," *The Mosquito Dispatch* (Hasbrouck Heights, NJ), July 1936, 9.

[224] "Boxing," 9.

[225] "20 Bouts Slated Tonight: Large Crowd Is Expected," *The Bergen Evening Record* (Hackensack, NJ), August 10, 1936, 16, accessed April 29, 2023, https://www.newspapers.com/.

[226] "Boxing," *The Mosquito Dispatch* (Hasbrouck Heights, NJ), June 1936, 7.

[227] "1271's Clambake," *The Mosquito Dispatch* (Hasbrouck Heights, NJ), September 1936, 4.

English composition, public speaking, and leather craft were among the myriad of academic classes offered to the enrollees, as indicated by *The Mosquito Dispatch*.[228] In October 1936, it was reported that one of the barracks would be converted into a schoolhouse. The barrack would be partitioned into five rooms, including classrooms, workshops, and a gym.[229] By November, *The Mosquito Dispatch* was reporting that construction was underway: "Work has been started in partitioning Barrack #5 for educational and recreational purposes. The gymnasium is equipped with a boxing ring, punching bag and stand, and a rowing machine."[230] A list of courses offered in December 1936 outlined a schedule of classes for typing, literacy, journalism, and leather craft, among other options at the converted schoolhouse. Since Teterboro was home to an airport, men could also take an aeronautics class. There were many opportunities for the men during the week to grow intellectually. At the beginning of 1937, the New Year's edition of the camp newspaper offered a reminder to the enrollees to be productive:

> To you members of the CCC, your New Year's resolution should be to learn as much as you can during the year of 1937. Industry is always looking for good men. Make this your New Year's resolution, bear it and you will have given yourself a happy and prosperous new year.[231]

In addition to activities and educational opportunities offered to the enrollees, there was also a fervor of patriotism and an undercurrent of promoting masculinity within that text. According to historian Neil Maher, "By rehabilitating their bodies through outdoor labor, many corps enrollees also believed that they had regained their

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[228] *The Mosquito Dispatch* (Hasbrouck Heights, NJ), May 1936, 4.

[229] "Company 1271 to get Schoolhouse," *The Mosquito Dispatch* (Hasbrouck Heights, NJ), October 1936, 3.

[230] "Barrack #5," *The Mosquito Dispatch* (Hasbrouck Heights, NJ), November 1936, 11.

[231] *The Mosquito Dispatch* (Hasbrouck Heights, NJ), January 1937, 1.

masculinity."[232] The camp was intended to build the mind, body, and character of each enrollee. In the article entitled "Loyalty," a drawing presents an American flag and a saluting man with the phrases "to one's self," "your flag," "your comrades," and "to your country" around the image.[233] With words of positive reinforcement, it reads, "This company enjoys so fine a rating because you are faithful and loyal."[234] The author tells its CCC readers that Company 1271 men should "stand above the crowd; we want you to be highly respected citizens, admired by all who know you."[235] In an article on the same page called "Americanism," the author recalls the recent 1936 reelection of Franklin Roosevelt: "Franklin D. Roosevelt has won a most noble battle, as the idol of the people, and the champion of their liberties, bearing the brunt of the struggle, but never criticizing his opponents."[236] The article indicates that there was a pre-election debate in the country about the election, but regardless of one's politics, with the election concluded, "we must forget our pre-election ideas and attitudes and put our shoulder to the wheel and get behind the President of the United States."[237] This sentiment being directed at the young male enrollees is a reminder that the newspaper remained objectively pro-American and patriotic.

The final issue of the *Mosquito Dispatch* printed by Company 1271 of the Teterboro Camp was done in October 1937. The paper announced that the company of

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[232] Maher, *Nature's New Deal*, 100.

[233] "Loyalty," *The Mosquito Dispatch* (Hasbrouck Heights, NJ), December 1936, 4.

[234] "Loyalty," 4.

[235] "Loyalty," 4.

[236] "Americanism," *The Mosquito Dispatch* (Hasbrouck Heights, NJ), December 1936, 4.

[237] "Americanism," 4.

men would be making their way out west. One of the writers reminisced about the establishment of Company 1271, composed of workers from another CCC camp in the nearby Palisades who came to Teterboro to establish a "white camp."[238] While it is difficult to discern conclusively why the Black camp was moved out, this writer seems to have interpreted it as a move to establish a white camp. Incidentally, the final company to take over the camp was again an all-Black camp. Company MC-1271 moved west in October 1937, heading out to Nyssa, Oregon. With their departure, the final company of men would be moved to Teterboro.

Company 1269-c

Camp Company 1269-c made its way to Teterboro as the site's last installment of the CCC with an enrollment of nearly 200 men. The enrollees made their way to Teterboro from Tuckahoe, NJ. On March 28, 1937, an *Atlantic City Press* article offered its reader an overview of the company's time spent in Tuckahoe. On the fourth anniversary of the company's stay in Tuckahoe, the paper reported that there would be a celebration held at the camp to mark the occasion. "This camp is made up of colored boys, many of whom are from Atlantic City…" reported the paper.[239] Anybody interested but concerned about attending the anniversary party could be assured of "a cordial reception and the best efforts of both the boys and their white officers and project personnel to give them an insight into the working of the CCC."[240] Their work in

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[238] "So-Long," *The Mosquito Dispatch* (Hasbrouck Heights, NJ), October 1937, 4.

[239] "Tuckahoe CCC Four Years Old," *Press of Atlantic City* (Atlantic City, NJ), March 28, 1937, 2, accessed May 28, 2023, https://www.newspapers.com/.

[240] "Tuckahoe CCC Four," 2.

Tuckahoe was also a mosquito-control project: “The boys have done much work to improve this area as well as to carry on mosquito extermination in both Atlantic and Cape May Counties.”[241] The anniversary celebration invited the townsfolk to see what camp was like, complete with a library, sports fields, recreation rooms, and a hospital. In its concluding paragraph, the article implores townsfolk to see for themselves the positive impact of the CCC:

> No one should hesitate to visit the camp on the anniversary day as they will not only be well received and cared for, but will see and learn something worthwhile and come away with a feeling that the CCC is doing a work among these boys that may outweigh in value even the physical labor they perform for the State and County.[242]

A framed montage of pictures from the camp taken in Tuckahoe of the members of Company 1269-c offers a rare glimpse into the faces of these young men, preserved by the Historical Preservation Society of Upper Township. Figures 1 and 2 on the next page depict a camp photo and a list of the names of the enrollees.

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[241] "Tuckahoe CCC Four," 2.

[242] Frank M. Butler, "Tuckahoe CCC Four Years Old," *Atlantic City Press* (Atlantic City, NJ), March 1937, 2, accessed April 1, 2023, https://www.newspapers.com/.

Figure 1: This picture was obtained from Bob Holden, historian for Upper Township

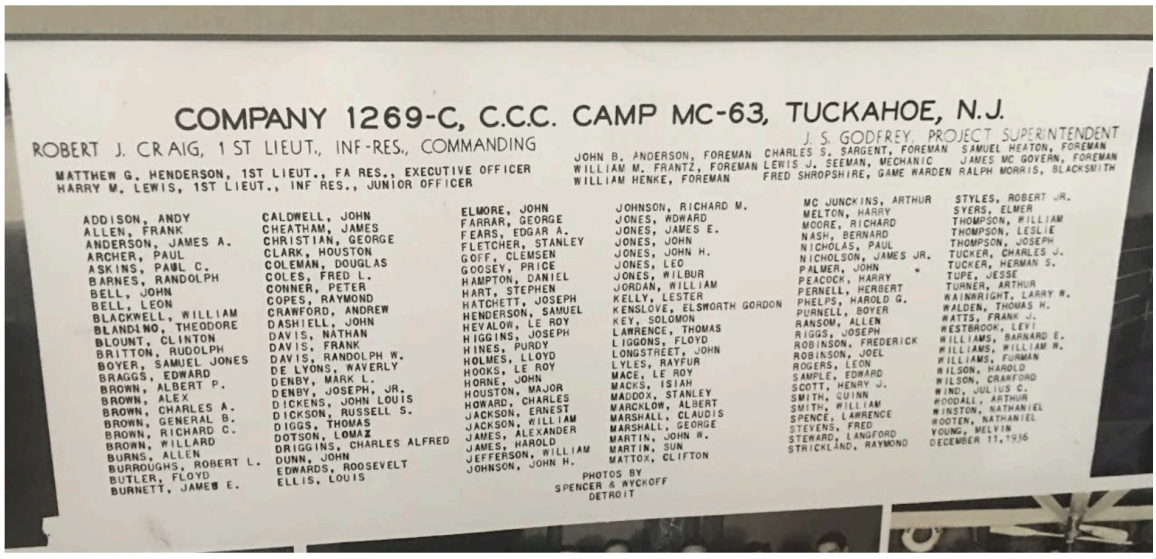

Figure 2: This picture was obtained from Bob Holden, historian for Upper Township

Unlike the first announcement of an all-Black group of enrollees to Teterboro in 1935, this time around there was no recorded antipathy voiced in the local papers about the group. The newspapers indicated that the enrollees were a “Negro troop” that would

continue along with the mosquito control work.[243] While there is no available camp newspaper for Company 1269-c, the camp inspection reports, which entitled the camp "Bendix," offers some insight into life for the enrollees. The report indicated high morale amongst the enrollees. Subjects of instruction for educational purposes included cooking, photography, bookkeeping, glee club, teacher training, carpentry, forestry, auto mechanic, landscaping, current events, citizenship, journalism, and English. Related educational opportunities included field trips, safety forums, first aid, concrete construction, sewage disposal, meatpacking, and paper manufacturing.[244] A *Bergen Evening Record* article said that the company received a favorable welcome from the community, especially from such entities as the local Baptist church and the WPA. In an effort at community outreach, the Company planned to hold a Halloween dance at the camp.[245]

One venture that remained particularly consistent with the previous company's activities at Teterboro was sports. Boxing in Bergen County drew great crowds and interracial competitions. Members of the Bendix Camp participated in a massive boxing event that brought prominent politicians and community leaders to the ring to watch. Former Governor Harold Hoffman and New Jersey state senator Charley Loizeaux were amongst those in attendance at the major boxing event sponsored by *The Bergen Evening Record* in September 1938. The headline in the paper after the event read: "Record

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[243] "New CCC Unit Sent to Bendix," *The Bergen Evening Record* (Hackensack, NJ), October 8, 1937, 7, accessed May 6, 2023, https://www.newspapers.com/.

[244] "Camp Inspection Report," July 22, 1938, Box #138, Teterboro Camp Report, National Archives, College Park, MD.

[245] "C.C.C. Unit Dances," *The Bergen Evening Record* (Hackensack, NJ), October 27, 1937, accessed June 11, 2023, https://www.newspapers.com/.

Crowd of 7,000 Witnesses 13 Champions Crowned."[246] There was tremendous coverage of the event in the paper, including a full page explaining the different fights. Page nineteen included images of each boxer. For each person, their name, town affiliation, weight, age, and nationality or race was listed. The categorizations of nationality included hyphenated groups like Italian-American, Polish-American, Irish-American, and English-American. Other white fighters were simply noted as "American," while Black fighters were listed as "colored." Notably missing from their title is any indication that they were "American." Two of the three Black fighters pictured, George Dillard (age 17) and Moses Lee (age 19), were from Bendix Camp.[247] While this might have been commonplace in the 1930s, the slight to Black men is glaring by contemporary standards of what it means to be American. These images indicate that there was a perception of hierarchy in America when it came to who was considered American and who is not.

The closing of the Bendix Camp in the summer of 1938 came through an announcement by Robert Fechner; it closed on October 25, 1938. It was to be one of 8 camps to be closed in New Jersey citing federal budget restrictions. Existing camp members could be relocated to continue their employment with the CCC. By March 1939 the National Youth Administration took over the CCC barracks. It was created with the intent to teach young people transferable skills that might lead to a career. Enrollees were

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[246] William Madden, "Record Crowd of 7,000 Witnesses 13 Champions Crowned," *The Bergen Evening Record* (Hackensack, NJ), September 20, 1938, 16, accessed May 6, 2023, https://www.newspapers.com/.

[247] "1938 Novice Champions in Record's Boxing Tournament," *The Bergen Evening Record* (Hackensack, NJ), September 20, 1938, 19, accessed May 6, 2023, https://www.newspapers.com/.

between the ages of 18 and 25; they were required to take educational classes and to do practical training in fields including electric wiring, airplane mechanics, or carpentry.[248]

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What did the camps mean for the Black men who worked in Teterboro? Although historian Olen Cole's research on the CCC, in the book *The African American Experience in the Civilian Conservation Corps,* is focused on California, some of his generalizations might apply to New Jersey. He asserts that, despite continued segregation in the Corps, most of the enrollees he interviewed had favorable impressions of the CCC: "Why were these men so appreciative to the government agency that deviated little from the discriminatory practices of the past?" asks Cole.[249] He found through his research that there are several explanations for this. First, Black youth were particularly desperate for a job during the Depression, and the direct benefits of the CCC were appealing. Second, the CCC offered these young men something beyond work: "The CCC taught them discipline and how to live and work with others."[250] He quotes one California camper: "'I didn't know of anyone who got a dishonorable discharge, because we all wanted to be in the CCC.'"[251] Many of Cole's testimonials reflect on the appreciation the men had for the CCC in getting them jobs, teaching them work skills, enabling them to support their families, and exposing them to new people. Some of the men Cole cites resented the

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[248] Al Hill, "150 Picked Men to Eat First N.Y.A. Meal Here Monday; Win Chance to Start Trade At Bendix Experience Camp," *The Bergen Evening Record* (Hackensack, NJ), March 10, 1939, 3, accessed May 6, 2023, https://www.newspapers.com/.

[249] Cole, *African-American Experience*, 66.

[250] Cole, *African-American Experience*, 67.

[251] Cole, *African-American Experience*, 67.

segregation "while others thought it was best for all concerned."[252] Without oral testimony from the men in Teterboro, we can wonder if their thoughts and experiences were parallel with their California counterparts. Nevertheless, their presence marked a brief yet important moment for the region as it was confronted with a change in a way only the CCC could do. When else would nearly 200 Black men make their way into these communities on the same day? It was a challenge to the status quo and pressed the townsfolk to react.

The Black CCC camps in Bergen County New Jersey served as a moment of reckoning in Bergen County. It exposed within some people a deep-seated racial prejudice and a fear of demographic changes. It also challenged some individuals to criticize the discrimination they witnessed. Finally, it led some people to reconsider their own prejudices and lose old hatreds, when they realized that Black CCC workers were nothing to fear in their community.

[252] Cole, *African-American Experience*, 68.

Chapter Four

The CCC in the New Jersey Palisades

"We are sure that someday you will look back [with] pride when you remember you were a part of that great organization, the CCC." - William Powers (CCC Newsletter *Clifftop Commentator* April 2, 1937)

The cliffs of the Palisades are the most striking geological feature of Bergen County, New Jersey. Today, when walking the cliffs, one will notice the trails, retaining walls, and picnic areas, all vestiges of the New Deal. The continued use of the area for recreational purposes is a physical reminder of the CCC and other agencies that helped to conserve the area. While the Teterboro camp was unique for its demographic makeup of Black workers and Camp Tera for its makeup of women, the Palisades camp serves as a control in this study. It was the traditional all-white and all-male CCC camp. What was life like for them and what kind of work did they do on the eastern border of Bergen County? This type of camp was the norm and the focus of most New Deal projects. Unlike the Teterboro camp, the creation of the CCC in the Palisades did not foster a confrontation between the enrollees and the local townsfolk. The story of the Palisades CCC camp can be told through camp inspection reports, local and camp newspapers, and park inspection reports. The best insight into this camp is through the lens of enrollee Peter Jacullo; Peter passed away a year after he was interviewed for this project. His memories and stories help to fill in the blanks left out of newspapers and reports. The CCC of the Palisades can also be told by the place itself: the walls, paths, and hiking trails that still exist today, benefiting each visitor 90 years later.

Fireside Chat:

"In creating this Civilian Conservation Corps we are killing two birds with one stone;" Franklin Roosevelt said this in outlining his program to the nation during a May 1933 fireside chat.[253] He continued: "We are clearly enhancing the value of our natural resources and second, we are relieving an appreciable amount of actual distress."[254] One of the great marvels of the CCC in the Palisades is that the nature of the work was arduous and painstaking. The commanding cliffs that overlook the Hudson River demand great labor to manipulate. Roosevelt said in his fireside chat that the great value of the CCC was that it would require manpower, not machinery: "One of the great values to this work is the fact that it is direct and requires the intervention of very little machinery."[255] This is especially true of the Palisades. Young men would build up their bodies and the landscape in the work done between 1933 and 1942.

They labored with heavy boulders and blasted rocks to build walls and park benches. Many were leaving home for the first time to enter a world that paralleled the Boys Scouts and the Army. In outlining his New Deal to the American people via radio, Roosevelt was inviting curious listeners to embrace and participate in the government's new public works projects.

The Palisades Today:

When visiting the Palisades Interstate Park of New Jersey today, a daytripper, hiker, or picnicker is first struck by the vast expanse of the cliffs, towered over by the

[253] Franklin Roosevelt, *Outlining the New Deal Program*, address, May 7, 1933, accessed December 4, 2023, http://docs.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/050733.html.

[254] Roosevelt, *Outlining the New Deal*, address.

[255] Roosevelt, *Outlining the New Deal*, address.

George Washington Bridge. It is the juxtaposition of both a natural and a man-made wonder. Unlike the area of the Teterboro camp, the Palisades Interstate Park of New Jersey shows visible reminders of the *Civilian Conservation Corps*. However, it takes a curious and well-informed observer to realize that much of their surroundings is the work done by various New Deal agencies, including the *Civilian Conservation Corps*.

The Palisades of New Jersey lie in stark contrast to the county which claims it. Bergen County is the most populated county in New Jersey, a busy suburb of New York City. Train lines and highways crisscross the county, people flood to and from Manhattan on their daily commute, and five major malls are daily ventures for the local population. Bergen County is not a natural wonder; it is the quintessential American suburb. The Palisades strike an onlooker or visitor as unique and out of place in Bergen County. A natural wonder, these cliffs have been inspiring observers from its early Native American inhabitants to the sailors on Henry Hudson's *Half Moon* ship, the first of the Europeans to see them.

Today, it is a destination point, mostly for people seeking to get away from the modern world and into nature. It attracts New York urbanites and New Jersey suburbanites, some seeking a common solace in the cliffs and some seeking the physical challenge of the steep inclines. A biker will take on the challenge of the high pathways, or a walker can get a change of scenery from the normal suburban street blocks. The natural beauty of the over 300-foot rock walls is in stark contrast to the massive modern-day skyscrapers across the river. While the rocks command the attention of its onlookers, the stature of the George Washington Bridge also commands the visitors' attention. When the bridge was completed in 1931, it was the largest suspension bridge

ever built. It became a vital physical link between Upper Manhattan and the developing New Jersey suburbs.[256] There was great fanfare about the new engineering marvel's opening. Crowds of people, military processions, Governors Franklin Roosevelt and Morgan Larson of New York and New Jersey, and the many workers who built the bridge came together to celebrate the achievement of connecting two landscapes across the vastness of the Hudson River.[257]

A visitor can enter the park through three main points of public entry in Alpine, Englewood, and Edgewater. Today, the trip to the park can be made from the scenic 9-W road, also known as the Palisades Interstate Parkway, or colloquially as the PIP to the locals and daily commuters. The northernmost entrance in Alpine leads directly past park headquarters, housed in a 1920s estate, and to one of two boat basins in the park. The Henry Hudson Drive snakes through the park, parallel to and in between 9-W and the Hudson River. In the summer, from the Henry Hudson Drive, one can hardly see the river from most areas due to the lush growth of the trees and foliage. As drivers (or bikers or runners) make their way south along the road, they will see trailheads, picnic areas, scenic overlooks, small beaches, and even the occasional waterfall cascading down the steep crevices of the cliffs.[258]

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[256] "History of the George Washington Bridge," Port Authority New York, New Jersey, accessed July 14, 2023, https://www.panynj.gov/bridges-tunnels/en/george-washington-bridge/history.html.

[257] "Two Governors Open Great Hudson Bridge as Throngs Look on," *The New York Times* (New York, NY), October 25, 1931, 1, 30.

[258] The Palisades Interstate Park of New Jersey is easily accessible via hiking trails or driving roads. For those not familiar with the area, the region is mapped out by the Palisades Interstate Park Commission which can be accessed digitally: https://www.njpalisades.org/pdfs/map.pdf.

Peter Jacullo:

On September 11th, 2022, just two months before his 104th birthday, Peter Jacullo sat at his kitchen table eager to speak with me about his experiences with the CCC. "The doctor says I'll live to be 110," he laughed, "but I don't think he knows what he's talking about."[259] Talking to Peter was a window into a generation that is nearly gone. Despite his age, his memory was still sharp; he was insightful, warm, and welcoming. His Emerson, New Jersey home, one he started building with his own hands in 1945, was full of family members; his daughter Jean drove in from Connecticut to help facilitate the interview. Peter enjoyed speaking with people about his experiences and had vivid memories of his youth. His interview offered a twenty-first century listener a firsthand glimpse into what life in the CCC was like, as told by somebody who participated. Peter spoke with pride about his participation in both the CCC and then later in the American Army during World War II.

Peter Jacullo was born on November 25, 1918, in the Bowery neighborhood of Lower Manhattan. He described his family as "very hard-working people."[260] His mother worked from the house, "sewing and such," as Peter said, while he did all types of jobs as a young child.[261] The family moved from New York City and settled in nearby Bergen County in the town of Wood-Ridge, incidentally near the Teterboro camp, although that is not where Peter would serve in the CCC.[262]

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[259] Peter Jacullo, interview by Leah Jerome, Emerson, NJ, September 11, 2022.

[260] Jacullo, interview.

[261] Jacullo, interview.

[262] Jacullo, interview.

When asked about the impact that the Depression had on his family, Peter indicated that his father was able to find work despite the tough times: "We felt the Depression but not very strongly. My father was a very handy man and he did plumbing work in New Jersey, and of course, I helped him."[263] The election of Franklin Roosevelt caused some pause for the Jacullos:

> At first, I didn't care for Mr. Roosevelt…but later I got to like him because I realized what he was doing. I didn't like the socialistic path because I always felt that man should work for his money. And the government was giving it out in different jobs…the CCC was an excellent way to help during the Great Depression.[264]

Peter continued by reflecting on how useful the agency could be today: "In fact, the CCC would be very helpful now."[265]

After making the move from Manhattan to Wood-Ridge, Peter had an enjoyable youth. As a teenager, he was adventurous, and his parents trusted him enough to roam around: "They gave me free rein. They knew that I was very responsible, very careful. I had been hoboing, hiking, getting along alright."[266] He even went so far as hopping a freight train to Chicago. His mother was an avid reader and came across an article on the CCC when Peter was 15 years old. He was excited about the prospect of joining the CCC and traveling across the country, maybe to California, he pondered. Peter joined the CCC "just for the fun of it."[267] He would serve for four months as a member of the CCC before going back to school to graduate from Rutherford High School and then later he would

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[263] Jacullo, interview.

[264] Jacullo, interview.

[265] Jacullo, interview.

[266] Jacullo, interview.

[267] Jacullo, interview.

serve in the military. While he had hoped to be a pilot in the Air Force after already doing some pilot training in New Jersey, he failed the Ishihara Test for colorblindness, "deceptive little circles," he said, thwarting his lifelong dream of being a fighter pilot.[268] However, he would serve proudly in the U.S. Army in the European Theater during WWII: "I always say that the CCC provided me with an excellent background for my life in the Army."[269]

Peter was part of the liberation of Europe and fought at the Battle of Normandy, even sustaining an injury to the back of his head when he got hit with shrapnel. He was also part of the Battle of the Bulge as the American forces maneuvered closer toward Germany in the final year of the war. When Roosevelt died, Peter was sad to see the Commander in Chief go; "he was a good leader," he said.[270] Peter's earlier reservations about the politician had changed over the many years of his presidency; he was a leader Peter relied on in peacetime and wartime from the CCC to the frontlines of combat. He finally returned home from Europe in July 1945, after a young adult life of serving his country having put in time with the CCC and five years in the Army. Peter came home and married his childhood sweetheart, Ines, who he had met while living in the Bowery. They would grow old together in their house in Emerson, New Jersey, where Ines would pass away at the age of 91 in 2008.[271]

> It gives me good feelings to talk about it [the CCC]; I would love to see a reunion, but I'm afraid most of the fellows are dead; most of them are gone. My problem is

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[268] Jacullo, interview.

[269] Jacullo, interview.

[270] Jacullo, interview.

[271] Legacy.com, "Ines Jacullo Obituary," NorthJersey.com Legacy, last modified 2008, accessed July 14, 2023, https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/northjersey/name/ines-jacullo-obituary?id=26619708.

> they're all dead because I lived much longer. In another couple of months, I'll be 104.[272]

He concluded by saying, "great life, great life," a reflection of over one hundred years of a life well lived.[273] Peter's insights on the camp, from camp life to free time to the work completed, add a component to this project that personalizes the story of the CCC.

The Palisades History:

At a time predating Anglo-Europeans in the New World, Native Americans traversed the rocky coastline of the Hudson River in the area they called We-Awk-En: "Rocks That Look Like Trees."[274] Long before the Hudson River became one of the most important economic channels in the New World, it was the lifeblood of diverse Native American groups, providing transportation, food, and even protection. The Sanhikan, Hackensack, Raritan, and Tappan Native American nations used the Palisades as a lookout spot, a high point to observe any enemies coming from over the river.[275]

By 1609, the Dutch made their first inroads into the Hudson River, led by the explorer Henry Hudson, the river's namesake. The land on either side of the river passed from Native to Dutch and then to British hands in 1664 under the threat of force, until it was crisscrossed by Revolutionary War armies and ultimately became the states of New Jersey and New York. The Dutch favored building up estates on the New York side of the

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[272] Jacullo, interview.

[273] Jacullo, interview.

[274] E. Emory Davis and Eric Nelsen, *New Jersey's Palisades Interstate Park* (Charleston: Arcadia Pub., 2007), 7.

[275] Robert O. Binnewies, *Palisades: The People's Park* (New York: Empire State Editions, an imprint of Fordham University Press, 2021), 6.

Hudson River and did not promote mass settlement around the Palisades.[276] In the years after the Civil War, the Palisades was an escape for the wealthy of New York, a place to purchase land atop the cliffs overlooking the Hudson River. It was a natural escape from the hustle and bustle of the city streets. Private owners divided the land of the Palisades.[277]

As time passed, the Industrial Revolution brought to the cliffs of New Jersey what it brought to the entire country: degradation of the natural landscape and capitalist money-making opportunities that challenged land preservation. Crushed stone was in demand as it was mixed with concrete which would make up the base of the foundations of city skyscrapers. Quarrymen began dynamiting the Palisades landscape.[278] "The Palisades are still regarded as one of the uncommon beauties of an uncommonly noble river," reported *The New York Times* in 1895.[279] "But how long they are to remain so is a problem that is seriously troubling many earnest persons who have broader views of the pure usefulness of beauty than those who see in hills only coal, stone, or iron?"[280] The author of the article lamented: "No beauty is sacred in the eyes of commerce."[281] At the time, the push to stop the destruction of the Palisades came from New Yorkers more than New Jerseyans.

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[276] Binnewies, *Palisades: The People's*, 5.

[277] Binnewies, *Palisades: The People's*, 5.

[278] Binnewies, *Palisades: The People's*, 6.

[279] "Save the Palisades from Ruin," *The New York Times* (New York, NY), September 29, 1895, 20.

[280] "Save the Palisades," 20.

[281] "Save the Palisades," 20.

The view of the Palisades faces New York over the Hudson River, which led New Yorkers to be more vocal.[282] New Jersey politicians, however, along with New York state politicians saw the need to address the destruction of the Palisades. The New Jersey governor, George Werts, in hopes of gaining traction with his colleagues for action to protect the Palisades, hosted a boat trip for them on the Hudson River to show the "wounds of quarrying."[283] In 1895, a Palisades study commission was created separately in each state to address the growing problem. The mission to save the Palisades had begun. In response to the actions taken by the New Jersey and New York governors, in 1895 and again in 1898, a bill failed to make its way through Congress that would have granted the federal protection of the Palisades. In addition to the leadership of two state governors, individual groups like the Englewood Women's Club formed to protest the quarrying. But astute quarry operators also wasted no time ingratiating themselves to politicians and seeking their support. The Palisades would get a champion in New York State's new governor, Teddy Roosevelt, in 1899.[284] "No government leader would bring more energy and sense of mission to the cause of national conservation than this legendary man," stated Palisades historian Robert Binnewies.[285]

The work Teddy Roosevelt did in saving the Palisades from destruction was the first of his great land preservation initiatives, a quality that would become a defining feature of his presidency. In the spring of 1900, Governor Roosevelt signed into legislation the establishment of the Commissioners of the Palisades Interstate Park.

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[282] Binnewies, *Palisades: The People's*, 8.

[283] Binnewies, *Palisades: The People's*, 8.

[284] Binnewies, *Palisades: The People's*, 12.

[285] Binnewies, *Palisades: The People's*, 12.

Roosevelt stated, “The Palisades should be preserved. They form one of the most striking and beautiful features of nature in the entire country, and their marring and ruin should be a source not merely of regret, but of shame, to our people.”[286]

Meanwhile, on the New Jersey side of the river, to create a state park in the Palisades, Governor Foster Voorhees had to battle fierce opposition against quarrymen and clifftop landowners. Ultimately, with strong enough support for the protection of the land, Governor Voorhees followed Roosevelt’s precedent and signed into law the Palisades Interstate Park Commission.[287] A primary question for the new park commission was how to contend with the landowners of the Palisades. The biggest question was that of the quarrymen. Financier and philanthropist J. P. Morgan agreed to donate over $125,000 to the commission and with that money, a deal was made with the Carpenter Brothers’ Quarry in Fort Lee to end the quarrying.[288] The quarrying of the Palisades ended the last week of December 1900 and would never occur again.[289] Despite the efforts of quarrymen to procure the resources of the Palisades, the natural beauty remained intact and it would take the efforts of the Park Commission to maintain and polish the landscape for the sake of conservation. Much of that work would be done through the agencies of the New Deal.

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[286] Ardon Bar-Hama, ed., "Hudson Rising: The Palisades," New York Historical Society, accessed June 25, 2022, https://hudsonrising.nyhistory.org/the-palisades/.

[287] Binnewies, *Palisades: The People's*, 16.

[288] "At the Palisades Interstate Park in New Jersey," Palisades Interstate Park Commission, accessed July 11, 2023, https://www.njpalisades.org/history.html.

[289] Binnewies, *Palisades: The People's*, 12.

The New Deal Comes to the Palisades:

The Great Depression had a significant impact on the Palisades. Nature is an inexpensive means of entertainment and strolls through the Palisades replaced more expensive getaways for local attendees. A May 1936 *New York Times* article invited the "winter-weary urbanite" to turn "from his habitat of stone and steel and bustle for fresher, quieter surroundings" in the many state parks.[290] Of the 23,000,000 park visitors to New York state parks, half of them were to the Palisades. The author of the article credited the uptick in visits to new modes of transportation: by rail, river steamer, and car. Such new modes of transportation made visits to the cliffs from neighboring New York City more accessible.[291]

Video reels show hundreds in attendance on the banks of the Hudson River. It is an unfamiliar sight by today's standards.[292] It would be unconventional and certainly unsanitary for people to wade in the waters of the high-trafficked Hudson River today. But the view of the river over 100 years ago shows a much different sight of sunbathers and swimmers using the park facilities and keeping cool in the summer heat. The simplicity of a local picnic or stroll along the banks of the river was an escape from the trauma of the financial crisis.

The New Jersey end of the park, containing about 2,500 acres of land, is known as the Palisades Interstate Park in New Jersey. The park extends half a mile from the

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[290] Barron C. Watson, "Travel and Recreation: Back to Woods and Streams," *The New York Times* (New York, NY), May 17, 1936, 188.

[291] Watson, "Travel and Recreation," 188.

[292] *A New Deal for the Palisades Interstate Park*, Palisades Interstate Park Commission, 2001, accessed July 19, 2023, https://vimeo.com/22023989.

coastline inland and consists of the Hudson River shorefront, uplands, and cliffs.[293] On the Jersey side, there are over thirty miles of hiking trails, cross-country skiing routes, a scenic road, picnic areas, playgrounds, a nature sanctuary, two boat basins, various historical sites and markers, and access to scenic overviews from the top of the cliffs to the shore. The New York end of the system contains Bear Mountain State Park and Harriman State Park.[294] In Bergen County, New Jersey, the Palisades Interstate Park runs 12 miles along the coast of four towns: Fort Lee, Englewood Cliffs, Tenafly, and Alpine. While it should be noted that preservation and conservation are not the same, as mentioned in Chapter One, the program established by the New Deal in the Palisades was one of conservation, whereas the creation of the park at the turn of the century was one of preservation. In response to the Industrial Revolution, the Progressive Era would pit these ideas against each other, with the preservationist school of thought believing that land needed to be saved, not to be touched, but to be protected. In contrast, conservationists sought to use the natural resources of the country for "the greatest good of the greatest number in the long run," in the words of American forester Gifford Pinchot.[295] To stop the quarrying was the preservationist aim of the park's creation, but Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal would transform the land for practical and leisurely uses, very much in alignment with the conservation vision.

The Palisades Interstate Park employed the labor of three different New Deal agencies: the short-lived *Civil Works Administration*, the *Civilian Conservation Corps*,

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[293] *Palisades Interstate Park of New Jersey*, map (Palisades Interstate Park Commission, n.d.), accessed August 2, 2023, https://www.njpalisades.org/pdfs/map.pdf.

[294] University of California Berkeley, "Palisades Interstate Park in New Jersey- Alpine NJ," The Living New Deal, accessed June 25, 2022, https://livingnewdeal.org/projects/palisades-interstate-park-alpine-nj/.

[295] Maher, *Nature's New Deal*, 25.

and the *Works Progress Administration*.[296] Before the New Deal, the Palisades were commonly used for hiking and its beaches; the New Deal did not change that but rather added to the park's development and accessibility. While the CCC brought in and housed workers, the *Civil Works Administration* (CWA) enabled Bergen County men to commute and work close to home at the Palisades Interstate Park. The CWA was established in 1933 and only lasted until 1934; it was an early program in the New Deal that promoted infrastructural development and unemployment relief. Subsequent agencies like the CCC and the WPA would have more substantial funding for major infrastructure projects. *The New York Times* journalist Robert Stakesing called the CWA in Bergen County a "success beyond the hopes of even its most enthusiastic advocates."[297] Of the 8,200 CWA workers employed in Bergen County, 1,100 of them were working at Palisades Interstate Park. *The New York Times* reflected:

> The work being done at Interstate Park in the Jersey section of the Palisades has attracted considerable attention. Over 1,100 persons have been employed there laying ten miles of piping to provide the park beaches along the Hudson with their first good water supply and building a rough-hewn stone bathhouse north of Alpine.[298]

CWA workers commuted to the Palisades from Southern Bergen County towns including Fairview, Cliffside Park, and Fort Lee. They engaged in manual labor to improve the structural integrity of the natural landscape. Despite frigid temperatures and a particularly harsh winter, they worked on road grading, laying a cobblestone base on the road in the park, building two stone bathhouses, constructing refreshment stands and entrance booths for tourists, and building seawalls underneath the George Washington Bridge. CWA

[296] Davis and Nelsen, *New Jersey's*, 95.

[297] Robert Stakesing, "CWA Great Benefit to Bergen County," *New York Times*, February 25, 1934, 6, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

[298] Stakesing, "CWA Great," 6.

engineers also worked on surveying the land for a new parkway that was being planned at the top of the Palisades, snaking along the Bergen County coastline. The CWA ended when the agency disbanded in March 1934, but only after four-hundred-thousand man-hours had been logged in the park."[299]

The *Civilian Conservation Corps* Comes to the Palisades:

There were no CCC camps built in Bergen County during the first enrollment period of the agency.[300] In April 1933, New Jersey Representative Edward Kenney urged the federal government to bring a CCC camp to the Palisades. He wrote a letter directly to Robert Fechner and emphasized that both New York and New Jersey had already come together in a joint effort to preserve the Palisades, which aligned with the conservationist goal of the agency. Up until that point, Kenney felt that any effort to make the land into a sustained and manicured park was limited and unfulfilled.[301] He saw the CCC as an opportunity to bring a necessary change to the park. Whether it was the influence of the Bergen County Congressman that led to the Bergen County CCC project initiative is unclear. However, in the late fall of 1933, a company of the *Civilian Conservation Corps* was enrolled in the area known as Greenbrook on the Tenafly/Alpine border. That same year, John D. Rockefeller Jr. gave to the Palisades Interstate Park Commission the title for land that he hoped to see used as part of the proposed parkway. It was in 1941 that the idea of the parkway started to be formalized. The road would connect all parts of the

[299] "From the Hard Winter: A 'Cliff Notes' Story," Palisades Interstate Park Commission, last modified 2014, accessed June 25, 2022, https://www.njpalisades.org/fromHardWinter.html.

[300] Duxbury, *The Boys*, 23.

[301] "Bergen Congressman Urges Reforestation Camp Near Alpine to Beautify Palisades," *The Herald News* (Passaic, NJ), April 20, 1933, 3, accessed July 12, 2023, https://www.newspapers.com/.

Palisades Interstate Park from New York through New Jersey, and offer an alternative route to travelers traversing to and from the newly built George Washington Bridge.[302]

The CCC's first two camps in the eastern part of the United States were in the Palisades, on the New York side, in Harriman Park, and west of Harriman in "Pine Meadow Swamp."[303] Soon after, camps would emerge on the Jersey side. *The Bergen Evening Record* marked the momentous creation of the Palisades CCC camp on the New Jersey end of the Palisades with a headline on November 23, 1933: "Construct Ten Camps in Interstate Park."[304] The article indicated that the camp would be under the direction of the U.S. War Department. It is also noted in the article that Robert Fechner made a trip to the New York state side of the Palisades when evaluating areas that would be considered for the agency. The newspaper described the construction of the camp: "Each camp unit includes eleven buildings; five dormitories, each for forty men, a mess hall, quarters for the Army officers in charge, infirmary, recreation hall, storehouse, etc."[305] Young men from nearby Bergen, Rockland, and Orange Counties would be the majority of workers working at the Palisades CCC camp, provided they were "in need of relief, certified by the relief agencies in those counties."[306] So young men like Peter Jacullo, who might have dreamed of adventures in California, instead found a home with

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[302] *60 Years of Park Cooperation - N.Y. - N.J.*, 3rd ed., Palisades Interstate Park Commission (Bear Mountain, 1960)

[303] Binnewies, *Palisades: The People's*, 197.

[304] "Construct Ten Camps in Interstate Park," *The Bergen Evening Record*, November 23, 1933, 10, http://www.newspapers.com.

[305] "Construct Ten Camps," 10.

[306] "Construct Ten Camps," 10.

the CCC in nearby Alpine, New Jersey. The *Record's* article concluded with a reflection on the intangible and tangible benefits of the CCC:

> The CCC idea is clearly one which all engaged are going to be able to regard with pride and satisfaction, for its effect on these directly and indirectly, concerned; on the welfare of a large part of the country's population, and in the results of permanent value to the public properties benefited.[307]

Enrollment in CCC camps was for men ages 18 to 25, who would be paid $30 monthly and would send $25 back to their families, all of whom had been registered with state relief agencies.[308] Although those were the federal requirements, an advertisement for local enlistments from the town of Ridgewood's *Sunday News* states that the maximum age was twenty-nine years.[309] *The Ridgewood Herald* stated that the CCC was "for men who have been wandering, homeless, about the country, looking for work, and who are to be given an opportunity for obtaining shelter and food for the winter, in return for work on public properties."[310] The camps were communities unto themselves where young men were conditioned to follow orders, work, and sustain their camp communities, all while providing for their families. The boys were given food, shelter, and an allowance for the work they did.[311] One columnist from *The New York Times*, reflecting on the success of the CCC, called it a "social experience" putting "young men into a

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[307] "Construct Ten Camps," 10.

[308] Maher, *Nature's New Deal*, 19.

[309] CCC Enrollments," *The Sunday News* (Ridgewood, NJ), September 29, 1935, newspapers.com.

[310] "Winter Camp For Transients: How Homeless Men are Cared for In Interstate Park." The Ridgewood Herald [Ridgewood, NJ], 3 Jan. 1934. newspapers.com. Accessed 25 June 2022.

[311] Maher, *Nature's New Deal*, 39.

definite and purposeful routine."[312] "Boys come back from the field with deeper chests and broader shoulders and a look of competent sureness in their eyes."[313]

In all, within the New Jersey end of the park, there would be two CCC camps, SP-11 and SP-12, with companies #1271 and #1242, respectively. Camp SP-11's opening on December 1, 1933, was the first CCC camp constructed in Bergen County and would close in 1936.[314] It was located in the Greenbrook area of the Palisades Interstate Park of New Jersey on the Tenafly and Alpine border. Camp SP-12 was occupied in June of 1935 and "was on higher ground and closer to the majestic cliffs of the Palisades."[315] The two camps coexisted for eight months as separate entities; however, they completed similar projects affiliated with the park.[316] Camp SP-12 would exist for another five years.[317]

The Work:

The Palisades camps were located in Alpine; however, they are recorded as Englewood. Camps SP-11 and SP-12 were named as such because they were the eleventh and twelfth state park CCC camps in New Jersey.[318] Upon constructing the first camps in New York and New Jersey, it was a tremendous undertaking to build and prepare the camps to house the men. According to historian Kathleen Duxbury, "The camp [SP-12]

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[312] Frank Ernest Hill, "Salvaging Youth in Distress," *The New York Times* (New York), April 25, 1935, 12, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

[313] Hill, "Salvaging Youth," 12.

[314] Duxbury, *The Boys*, 31.

[315] Duxbury, *The Boys,* 27.

[316] Duxbury, *The Boys*, 27.

[317] Duxbury, *The Boys*, 31.

[318] Duxbury, *The Boys*, 17.

was built to replace the older SP-11, which was destined to be flooded for a recreational lake."[319] The camps' projects included seeding, vista clearing, planting trees, insect control, and erosion control.[320]

One of the aims of the CCC was to create recreational outdoor tourism in the country's parks. The Corps worked to make parks more accessible and accommodating to hikers, day-trippers, and outdoor enthusiasts.[321] They built drinking fountains, bathhouses, bathrooms, and made structural improvements to state and national parks. By 1935, an early June *New York Times* article entitled "Into the Vast Palisades Park: New Throngs are Exploring the 48,000 Wooded Acres, Where the Play Facilities Have been Enlarged and Refurbished," commented on the improvements being made in the Palisades to greet tourists: "This year the area greets its visitors with many improvements. Relief workers have been renewing and adding to the facilities already there in large measure for all kinds of recreation."[322] The Palisades improvements lived up to Roosevelt's vision of opening up the natural landscape to the American public: "Even those who regularly visit the parks every year will find much that will be new to them…" explained *The New York Times*.[323]

Extensive documentation of the work done by the CCC enrollees can be found in the *Annual Reports of the Commissioners of the Palisades Interstate Park New Jersey*. Most of the documentation discussed how the park was made more accessible to people,

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[319] Duxbury, *The Boys*, 27.

[320] Duxbury, *The Boys*, 23.

[321] Maher, *Nature's New Deal*, 71.

[322] E.L. Yordan, "Into the Vast Palisades Park," *The New York Times*, June 2, 1935, 154, Accessed April 4, 2023, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

[323] Yordan, "Into the Vast," 154.

more friendly to visitors, safer, sustainable, and better manicured. The reports of the commission were meticulously detailed. The 1934 report stated that: "Camp SP no. 11, at Greenbrook, gave excellent service throughout the year."[324] The documentation explained the work done by the CCC enrollees, all completed with "hand power."[325] Peter Jacullo recalled the kind of labor and the manpower used on the various projects at the Palisades:

> We did all kinds of work but we were very careful that we didn't do union work because the union was on us; they were right there…We built and rebuilt stone fences; we built and rebuilt roads. Whenever there was a slide when the cliffs went down we got to clean it up or else it would destroy the two lower roads. There was one primary lower road and there was a work road near the river. We had to clean that all up and get rid of the stones. The problem was we didn't have equipment, everything was by hand.[326]

A major project was constructing a retention wall to combat erosion caused by the elements. The wall was built over the scenic Henry Hudson Drive within the park. "There were no accidents during the work on this project," was reported.[327] This would be echoed in the April 1937 edition of the camp newspaper, reporting no casualties in the work done.[328] That is a marvel considering the nature of the labor, which required the movement of heavy stones. All of the stone used for the retaining wall came directly from the park itself. Boulders were blasted to make stones that would be pieced together to make the wall. After the rocks were broken to the correct size by stone sledges they were then hoisted by hand power to make the wall. Eighteen to twenty men at a time would

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[324] Thirty-Fifth Annual Report of the Commissioners of the Palisades Interstate Park New Jersey. (N.J. 1935).

[325] Thirty-Fifth Annual Report of the Commissioners of the Palisades Interstate Park New Jersey. (N.J. 1935).

[326] Jacullo, interview.

[327] Thirty-Fifth Annual Report of the Commissioners of the Palisades Interstate Park New Jersey. (N.J. 1935).

[328] "No Accidents in Four Years Claim Record," *The Clifftop Commentator* (Englewood, NJ), April 16, 1937, 6.

hoist the rocks using block and line over wooden skids to the appropriate wall level. The retaining wall remains a visible remnant of the CCC still serving an important purpose in the park today. Another way of combating erosion was to plant proper foliage along the sloping landscape. Sod and 3,000 Scotch Broom and Scotch Pine plants were planted along sloping banks by the men of the CCC.[329]

Eleven miles of trails were improved throughout the park in 1934: "Three thousand, nine hundred and sixty-two man days were expended in the work of filling and grading these trails, removing large rocks, cutting overhanging brush and poisonous weeds, constructing stone steps, installing directional signs, etc."[330] Another important project was the elimination of destructive pests like tent caterpillars and managing diseased trees while planting thousands more over the years.

The 1935 report indicated the addition of a new camp coexisting with Camp SP-11: "There were two camps in the Park during the year, Camp SP-11 throughout the year and Camp SP-12 after July 1st."[331] The report included some similar work as the year before but made new additions like improving the bathrooms for visitors and installing pipelines for the water fountains and fire lines. Seventy-five picnic tables and bench seats were constructed for visitors. In this report, it was noted that 20,000,000 destructive worms were destroyed, along with the removal of dead and diseased trees.[332]

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[329] Thirty-Fifth Annual Report of the Commissioners of the Palisades Interstate Park New Jersey. (N.J. 1934).

[330] Thirty-Fifth Annual Report of the Commissioners of the Palisades Interstate Park New Jersey. (N.J. 1934).

[331] Thirty-Sixth Annual Report of the Commissioners of the Palisades Interstate Park New Jersey. (N.J. 1935).

[332] Thirty-Sixth Annual Report of the Commissioners of the Palisades Interstate Park New Jersey. (N.J. 1935).

By 1936, the report covered only Camp SP-12. Similar work was being continued by the agency from forestry to erosion control to construction of sea walls along the Hudson River. More work was being done to construct trails and maintain and plant trees.[333]

The 1937 report of the work done by the CCC in the Palisades lauded the important and lasting work done regarding erosion control: "The exceedingly helpful work done by the CCC in terracing the slopes above the Henry Hudson Drive, thereby minimizing the danger of slides, was continued."[334] The reports thoroughly detailed the work done by the men and the hours of manpower used. Year after year, it included similar backbreaking work. The 1941 report indicated the closing of the one existing camp:

> On June 26th the CCC authorities advised that the camp in this park would be withdrawn within 5 days for defense purposes. This relief agency for several years has been of invaluable assistance to the park program.[335]

When recalling the nature of the work, Peter said with a smile that the work was hard but enjoyable:

> The only equipment we really had was an old truck; we used that with chains to pull rocks off the road…If the rock was too big we cut it up with chisels and hammers or with [drills]. We worked very hard. It was laborious work and we enjoyed it.[336]

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[333] Thirty-Seventh Annual Report of the Commissioners of the Palisades Interstate Park New Jersey. (N.J. 1936).

[334] Thirty-Eighth Annual Report of the Commissioners of the Palisades Interstate Park New Jersey. (N.J. 1937).

[335] Forty-Second Annual Report of the Commissioners of the Palisades Interstate Park New Jersey. (N.J. 1942).

[336] Jacullo, interview.

The camp newspapers also reported on the nature of the work. Much of what we can learn about the work done and the lives of the boys at the camps can be understood through their own words in their bi-monthly newspaper. This publication of the various newspapers (at times changing names from the *Clifftop Commentator* to the *Amateur Authors Monthly* to *The Palisades Press*) gave the men an outlet to write, inform outsiders of camp events and accomplishments, and help to define and create a community atmosphere within the camp. To a twenty-first century reader, they provide the voices of the people of the camps and insight into their lives and work. The newspapers cover a variety of topics; most of the writing is lighthearted and entertaining. They inform the reader about what is happening at the CCC camp from activities to excursions into the neighboring towns. In some instances, the paper introduces the readers to different staff members and leaders within the camp organization. As with the camp papers from the Teterboro location, the tone of the newspaper is patriotic and celebratory of the CCC. It is not an outlet to complain but rather an opportunity for relaxing readings and reflection on camp life and its people. It brings to life the stories the campers are telling themselves about themselves.

Regarding the nature of the labor, one article detailed the work as a "heavy construction program" that utilized "the natural rock of the region" to create the sea walls and retaining walls.[337] Other jobs are explained, like creating picnic tables and making fireplaces for picnickers, which were also made of stone to avoid forest fires. The manicuring of park grass, weeding out of diseased trees, and overall beautification of the

[337] McGuinness, "Work Program for SP-12," *The Palisades Press* (Englewood, NJ), June 1, 1938, 4.

area was an important part of work life. Beyond the lasting benefits that people experience when visiting the park, was the educational aspect of camp life for workers:

> On each of the job sub-classifications enrollees can profit from the valuable experience being obtained. With the proper application and initiative, enrollees can become experts at each phase of the work which will prove a great [illegible] towards the securing of civilian jobs when they leave the work project.[338]

Camp Life:

Reveille: the sound of the Army wakeup call would resound through the barracks of Alpine's CCC camps every morning at 6:15 a.m.[339] With a bugler on staff, it must have sounded like any Army base as the men went from the barracks to breakfast in anticipation of the day's work. As with all CCC initiatives, the objective of the agency was to help the land and help the people who were helping the land; the development and well-being of the men at work were central to the agency's focus. To that end, education was essential to the program. The CCC "supplemented on-the-job training with a more formal camp educational program."[340] Camps included libraries, and funds were allocated to help fill these libraries with books and periodicals. Much of the literature was about conservation to help promote continued interest in the topic after a long day's work. All CCC camps had voluntary night classes and much of the education provided was supposed to encourage knowledge about conservation. By 1935, 87% of CCC enrollees nationally partook in the camp's educational offerings.[341] According to *The Clifftop Commentator*, SP-12's camp newspaper publication, the educational department of the

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[338] McGuinness, "Work Program," 4.

[339] Duxbury, *The Boys*, 57.

[340] Maher, *Nature's New Deal*, 88.

[341] Maher, *Nature's New Deal*, 90.

camp offered night classes on Wednesday and Thursday on topics ranging from industrial arts, typing, and cooking, to carpentry, ball-room dancing, photography, English-language learning classes, and journalism offered in Fort Lee Night School.[342] Regarding on-the-job training at the campsite, a trained foreman would teach the recruits about their task and jobs.[343] "Take the opportunity of helping yourself to some free education that surely won't hurt you and might even be of some definite assistance in getting or holding a job someday," writes CCC worker and *Clifftop Commentator* journalist Nick DeSerio.[344] In 1938, a new educational building was constructed for the men. The new library was said to be "the best-looking room in the whole Camp."[345]

Beyond the mental transformation of CCC enrollees was the physical transformation of the young men on account of intense manual labor and being fed like an army. As a prerequisite for enrollment was being on relief, the CCC was full of poor men, many malnourished. One *Clifftop Commentator* journalist wondered what George Washington would have thought of the CCC reflecting on the positive implications of getting young men to do physical labor. The physical labor and rigorous exercise the men endured led to a healthier life and would "provide our future citizens with a stock of physically, as well as mentally sound men."[346] Moreover:

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[342] Nick DeSario, "Opportunity Is Knocking," *The Clifftop Commentator* (Englewood, NJ), April 16, 1937.

[343] "Educational Program," *The Clifftop Commentator* (Englewood, NJ), April 16, 1937, 8.

[344] DeSario, "Opportunity Is Knocking."

[345] Dominick Caramango, "The New Educational Building," *The Palisades Press* (Englewood, NJ), June 1, 1938, 8.

[346] "George Washington and the CCC," *Amateur Author's Monthly* (Englewood, NJ), February 1936, 3.

> In keeping these fellows occupied physically as well as mentally, the government lessens the possibility of crimes among the members. This is because if a fellow's mind is willing to commit an infringement on the law of the land, his body is too weary from work. Less crime has been reported by youths of CCC [illegible].[347]

Peter had memories of the barracks, camp life, leadership, and activities he participated in while in the CCC. He recalled that there were showers and private toilets in each barrack. He remembered the nature of the men he worked with, as he called them jokingly not "actually Harvard graduates."[348] They were "a pretty rough and ready crew."[349] An activity not covered by the newspapers and most interesting perhaps is the challenge that some of the men took to swim across the large expanse of the Hudson River. "We swam across a couple of times," said Peter.[350] "The problem was when you swam across you had to swim with the tide coming in."[351] Because of the tide, when swimming across the Hudson River the swimmer would find himself way off course from where he started. "You had to wait for the tide to change so you could get back near the [George Washington Bridge]."[352] He also had fond memories of climbing up and down the cliffs with no equipment but some ropes: "And I loved to climb up and down the cliffs. I enjoyed it."[353] Even though the labor-intensive work was enjoyable, it was the time off that Peter most enjoyed: "Of course, all the young ladies from Manhattan came up to swim with their parents. They would feed us. We would go swimming with them

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[347] "George Washington," 3.

[348] Jacullo, interview.

[349] Jacullo, interview.

[350] Jacullo, interview.

[351] Jacullo, interview.

[352] Jacullo, interview.

[353] Jacullo, interview.

and they would give us a meal. Especially the Italian meals."[354] Another activity Peter shared was evening bus trips to the local town of Englewood to see a movie.

> On a Saturday night, they would drive us into Englewood for the movies. The amusing part was when you got to the theater you had to count twenty off then after the show you had to get twenty on [the bus]. It was very strict because the boys were running to hit the bars.[355]

Sports were as essential in the lives of the CCC men of the Palisades as they were for the men of Teterboro. "Although we worked hard they gave us time for play," stated Peter.[356] In *The Clifftop Commentator* April 1937 edition the article "Recreation" enumerates the many different athletic ventures offered at the camp. Boxing, pool, ping-pong, chess, checkers, and darts were conducted in the camp gym every night. "Pick up some activity, and get into it. You will be much happier, and when you leave this camp, you will be much better men," urged the article.[357] In addition to sports, there was also theater. A drama club was formed that would write and perform plays. "Their first attempt was such a success that they immediately launched into a more ambitious undertaking" of a double feature.[358] According to the camp newspapers, a favorite activity of the men was co-ed dances. In many camp newspapers, headlines stated the success of a dance and how well attended and enjoyable it was.

One favorable aspect of the CCC was the consistency of being fed, even though there were some complaints about the food quality. The enrollees were able to work hard, live comfortably, and also know from where their next meal was coming, never having to

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[354] Jacullo, interview.

[355] Jacullo, interview.

[356] Jacullo, interview.

[357] "Recreation," *The Clifftop Commentator* (Englewood, NJ), April 16, 1937, 8.

[358] The Dramatic Club," *The Clifftop Commentator* (Englewood, NJ), April 16, 1937, 10.

worry about the uncertainty of starvation that many Americans encountered during the Great Depression. The breakdown of a standard day's menu was as follows. Breakfast included oatmeal, milk, fried corn mush, bacon, syrup, bread, butter, and coffee. Lunch was made up of Boston baked beans, egg salad, tangerines, bread, butter, and coffee. And the day wrapped up with dinner consisting of baked smoked ham, cabbage, roast potatoes, bread pudding, bread, butter, and coffee. Not everybody found the food satisfactory. One disgruntled friend of the workmen took his complaint right to President Roosevelt in a strongly worded letter complaining about the food and the camp leadership. Not even an enrollee himself, Joseph Klein of Runnemede, N.J., said his friends working at the Palisades for Company 1242 in 1936 often complained about "insufficient food, being driven to[o] hard by the [foremen] while at work, and overcrowded sleeping quarters."[359]

Other complaints were voiced, and inspection reports indicated troubles within the camp. A July 1938 Camp Inspection Report had much to say about the camp morale:

> This camp has been poorly handled in [the] past year with incapable officers. Morale had been low and camp allowed to run down…There has been a slow but steady improvement. Better mess now being served and morale is very good. Both the commanding officer and junior officer types that merit confidence that there will be still further improvement at this camp in the months ahead. Camp buildings located on rocky hillsides. Believe that attention should be given to improved lighting system at night. Rocky and hilly pathways. Boys have been hurt in trying to go from building to building at night.[360]

[359] Klein, Joseph. Letter to Franklin Roosevelt, January 26, 1936. Accessed July 18, 2023. NARA, Camp Inspection Reports, RG 35, E115, Box #138 E. 115.

[360] "Camp Inspection Report," July 20, 1938, Box #140 E. 115, Camp Inspection Report, National Archives, College Park, MD.

There were periodic complaints about the camps, even prompting an investigation from the Secretary of War. Some of the problems were attributed to the poor leadership of the camp, as documented by Kathleen Duxbury in her book *The Boys of Bergen.*

High Praise for the Palisades Camp:

Despite some internal problems, upon the fifth anniversary of the creation of the CCC, a great opportunity to celebrate came to the New Jersey Palisades. *The Bergen Evening Record* reported in an article, "Camp Here Gets National Honor," that "the Englewood camp [had] been given the single honor of representing the national organization over the [radio] air."[361] Joining in the broadcast was Robert Fechner in Washington D.C. and the Alpine camp educational advisor, Andrew Rugvie. The event was attended by the mayors of the various towns surrounding the camp and park directors. The public was also invited to visit the camp, tour the area and observe the work being done.[362] This is a clear indication that the Englewood Camp was the prototypical camp the government was promoting and espousing. Nothing is even mentioned in the article about the nearby Teterboro camp, still in operation.

The War:

The war would end the *Civilian Conservation Corps* in the Palisades Interstate Park of New Jersey, as it did nationwide. Men like Peter left their homes for basic training and combat overseas. The war and the need for military preparedness pulled the

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[361] "Camp Here Gets National Honor," *The Bergen Evening Record* (Hackensack, NJ), March 30, 1938, 5, accessed July 13, 2023, https://www.newspapers.com/.

[362] "Camp Here," 5.

men out of the CCC and their conservation projects. These young men were now better prepared for the discipline of being a wartime soldier after their CCC experiences.

The CCC became a pipeline into the wartime Army for many of the servicemembers. Their time in the Corps would be a vital factor in the nation's readiness for war. Young boys became men; they gained weight and muscle and became accustomed to the regimen of the Army's daily routine. Moreover, they became accustomed to living away from home in barracks with young men working towards a common goal. These experiences would lead into their lives in the military as the men went from conserving the physical landscape to fighting in defense of the nation's ideals of democracy and liberty.

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The enrollees of the Bergen County CCC in the Palisades Interstate Park of New Jersey embarked on a unique enterprise to conserve the landscape of the Palisades, a piece of land that had been set aside as a protected park under one Roosevelt and then refined under another. From Teddy to Franklin Roosevelt, the Palisades owes a debt of gratitude for their vision and projects to protect it from destruction. On both the New York and the New Jersey sides of the Hudson River, there has been extensive development and construction over the years, but the Palisades is a stretch of land that is an environmental refuge where people can appreciate the natural surroundings and use them for sport and leisure.

The work done by the CCC and other New Deal agencies has lasted over the decades and will continue to define the landscape of the Palisades Interstate Park of New Jersey. The local men who lived amid the cliffs of the Palisades, swam in the Hudson,

and built its retaining walls have left behind a legacy that still benefits park attendees nearly a century later.

Chapter Five

The Women of Camp Tera

The Franklin Roosevelt Memorial in Washington D.C. is unlike other presidential memorials. The monument's construction enables visitors to meander their way through outdoor rooms, which tell the story of Roosevelt's four presidential terms. The iconic sculpture of a breadline helps to tell the story of the Great Depression. The bronze sculpture of five men created by George Segal, aptly entitled "Depression Breadline," conveys the desperation of those struggling and needing a meal. The breadline has a noticeable omission; all in the queue are male. Many images of Depression Era breadlines tell the same story: hungry men waiting wearily for sustenance. Historically and traditionally, women were the domestic caretakers, presumably the responsible figure in the home for feeding the family. Yet, they are not often seen in breadline images; this phenomenon is observed by author Erica Hahn in the article *Women without Work*.[363] This circumstance begs the question: what was the plight of women during the Great Depression? The CCC was specifically an agency established to address the plight of young men. However, there were enough high-powered women close enough to the president who saw this as problematic and hoped to offer a female counterpart to the agency. Individuals like First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins pushed for creating women's camps and saw themselves as responsible for this project. However, the outcome of the female camps did more to showcase the growing

[363] Erica Hahn, "Women without Work," *New Republic* 72, no. 981 (1933): 63-65, cited in Thomas W. Patton, "'What Of Her?' Eleanor Roosevelt and Camp Tera," New York History 87, no. 2 (2006): 236, Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/23183359, 234.

power and influence of a handful of politically active female change-makers in Washington than it did to redefine gender roles during the Great Depression.

Gender and the New Deal:

In the article, "The She-She-She Camps: An Experiment in Living and Learning, 1934–1937," historian Joyce Kornbluh discusses the phenomenon that began to emerge in Depression years of "bands of young, homeless women roaming the streets, reluctant to seek aid, frequently sleeping in train stations or behind heating ducts in subway bathrooms."[364] Kornbluh cites National Women's Party activist Helena Weed, who observed this and stated: "'Men thronged the breadlines; women hid their plight.'"[365] With the new initiative of government aid and relief being the cornerstone of the New Deal, where did women fit into the narrative? Did the New Deal set a new standard for the relationship between the government and women, or did it prioritize relief for men? The gendered notion of labor was an area in the 1930s that would test the limits of New Deal liberalism. Politicians like Franklin Roosevelt and Frances Perkins, who came of age during a time of social transformation for women at the height of the suffrage movement, would be confronted with a new challenge during the Great Depression. When addressing unemployment, would the aims, initiatives, and relief opportunities be equal between men and women, or would women have to back away from relief jobs to make way for the prioritization of male employment? Although the Great Depression was a financial crisis, it brought to the forefront the inevitable need for the government to

[364] Joyce L. Kornbluh, "The She-She-She Camps: An Experiment in Living and Learning, 1934–1937," in *Sisterhood and Solidarity*, by Joyce L. Kornbluh (n.p.: Temple University Press, n.d.), 255, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv6mtdfq.14.

[365] Kornbluh, "The She-She-She," 255.

confront gender, as it also had to face race when initiating New Deal agencies. Would the New Deal be a transformative social experiment or be held back to earlier notions of traditional gender roles?

To understand the role of women within the workforce during the Great Depression, it is necessary to understand the role of women in the workforce in the preceding era. A turning point for women and labor was World War I. While the factory system of the Industrial Revolution pulled women into assembly line work, the war was unique in that it forced women into roles that had previously been reserved for men.[366] The necessity of female labor with male shortages due to the war effort forced employers to challenge their preconceptions about women workers; many of them were often surprised at the quality of the work done by their new employees.[367] However, according to historian Alice Kessler-Harris, "when the war ended, the entire structure slipped back down nearly, but not quite, to where it had started."[368]

The war also transformed the American economy in the following decade, altering women's workforce roles. "Corporations and the communications industry embarked on their rapid expansion, gobbling up legions of telephone and telegraph operators as well as clerks and bookkeepers, virtually all female."[369] Women were furthermore taking jobs in new industries related to advertising and sales.[370] By 1930, women were gravitating to jobs in clerical work and service occupations in place of

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[366] Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-earning Women in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 219.

[367] Kessler-Harris, Out to Work, 219.

[368] Kessler-Harris, Out to Work, 219.

[369] Kessler-Harris, Out to Work, 224.

[370] Kessler-Harris, Out to Work, 224.

industries.[371] Beyond labor, women of the 1920s felt a sense of liberation and acted out on such feelings. The newly secured right to vote, greater access to birth control aids, and rising divorce rates to end bad marriages all combined to create a new sense of freedom for the American woman.[372] An increasing number of women joined the workforce, and the number of women who balanced being married and working also increased.[373] However, despite changing social norms for women in the 1920s, "unspoken social prescription - a tacit understanding about the primacy of home roles remained the most forceful influence."[374] Traditional and still popular perceptions of a woman's primary sphere being the home conflicted with the idea of a working woman. "Most women did not have the kinds of jobs that suggested the possibility of personal growth and satisfaction, and their daily lives were filled with the same pressures that had characterized the lives of their mothers a generation earlier."[375] Employers remained paternalistic, and female wages were lower than their male counterparts.[376] Discrimination patterns in the workforce prevented women from advancing in their careers.

New challenges would rise for women in the workforce during the Great Depression. According to Kessler-Harris, "The Depression turned what had been the previous decade's joyous discovery of freedom to work into a bitter defense of the right

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[371] Lois Rita Helmbold and Ann Schofield, "Women's Labor History, 1790-1945," *Reviews in American History* 17, no. 4 (1989): 505, https://doi.org/10.2307/2703424.

[372] Kessler-Harris, Out to Work, 224-225.

[373] Kessler-Harris, Out to Work, 229.

[374] Kessler-Harris, Out to Work, 231.

[375] Kessler-Harris, Out to Work, 236.

[376] Kessler-Harris, Out to Work, 238.

to a job."[377] On April 7, 1932, presidential candidate Franklin Roosevelt gave a radio address known as the *Forgotten Man Speech.* He spoke to the unseen American suffering under the hardship of the Great Depression:

> These unhappy times call for the building of plans that rest upon the forgotten, the unorganized but the indispensable units of economic power for plans like those of 1917 that build from the bottom up and not from the top down, that put their faith once more in the forgotten man at the bottom of the economic pyramid.[378]

If the forgotten man was Roosevelt's priority for unemployment relief, then it would take a network of women who could maneuver political power in the 1930s to address the issue of unemployment for women.

The First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt, fiercely supported women's rights and influenced the president considerably. The work of Hilda Worthington Smith also aided the drive for female visibility in the New Deal. She was appointed a specialist in Workers' Education under the *Federal Emergency Relief Administration* and became the director of the Workers' Service Program when the workers' education program was continued under the Works Progress Administration.[379] Along with Ms. Smith and Mrs. Roosevelt were two notable women who would become instrumental in addressing women in the New Deal: Democratic Party activist and later presidential advisor Molly Dewson and Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins. In her book *Beyond Suffrage: Women in the New Deal*, Susan Ware calls these women the "second generation of women reformers," continuing a tradition of female social action that rose to prominence during the

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[377] Kessler-Harris, Out to Work, 251.

[378] Franklin Roosevelt, "The Forgotten Man" (address, Albany, NY, April 7, 1932).

[379] Hilda Worthington Smith, "Papers of Hilda Worthington Smith," July 22, 1884-1972, accessed November 26, 2023, https://www.fdrlibrary.org/documents/356632/390886/findingaid_smith-hilda.pdf/d2bae4c7-12d9-4691-a09f-89c3be32763f.

Progressive Era.[380] "These women became active in social reform during the Progressive Era, kept alive the Progressive faith in the hostile 1920s, and capped their careers with participation in the New Deal."[381] Many women who found prominence in political roles in the New Deal were highly educated with college degrees and had engaged in politics in the preceding decades in areas including labor and suffrage. Susan Ware refers to these women as a *network* of social reformers who channeled their like-mindedness into New Deal policy. Another notable individual was Harry Hopkins, the director of the *Federal Emergency Relief Administration*. Hopkins is credited with creating the first women's camps that would model the CCC.

Molly Dewson was a critical figure in mobilizing women for support of Franklin Roosevelt in 1932 and became the director of the Women's Division of the Democratic National Committee.[382] The New Deal offered the people of the country a new sense of hope amid the rising financial crisis, and women like Molly Dewson and others in this network of female activists saw the New Deal as an opportunity for women: "with a sense of change in the air, women in public life sought to ensure that women shared in the progress."[383] As the head of the Women's Division of the Democratic National Committee, Molly Dewson sought to expand women's roles in government to aid in combating the Great Depression. As early as 1931, Dewson set out on a campaign to promote Frances Perkins as Secretary of Labor if Roosevelt was to be elected: "Although many people later assumed Eleanor Roosevelt had convinced her husband to appoint

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[380] Susan Ware, *Beyond Suffrage, Women in the New Deal* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), 19.

[381] Ware, *Beyond Suffrage*, 20.

[382] Ware, *Beyond Suffrage*, 41.

[383] Ware, *Beyond Suffrage*, 44.

Frances Perkins, Molly Dewson deserved most of the credit."[384] She was the "architect of the nationwide campaign"[385] built to support the promotion of Perkins as the first female cabinet secretary. She was relentless in her drive, enticing prominent figures to write letters to Roosevelt to support her appointment."[386] As a force in the Democratic Party, Dewson pushed for female roles in the New Deal.[387]

While it took forceful advocates like Dewson who pushed for female positions in the new government, it was also the reception of Roosevelt and his willingness to accept female workers that enabled change to happen: "If Roosevelt had failed to appreciate women's abilities or had felt uncomfortable working with women, no amount of pressure from his wife or Molly Dewson could have changed his mind," explained Susan Ware.[388] However, even though he respected such contributions, as Molly Dewson said, true access to the president through his "brain trust" was not a woman's privilege. Regardless of such limitations, "the number of women appointed to policy making posts during the Roosevelt Administration increased" due to women and influencers like Dewson and Eleanor.[389] The election of Roosevelt brought significant change to Washington and the requirement for government jobs to be filled, especially since it had been over a decade since a Democrat was in office. Moreover, the New Deal ushered in a new wave of jobs that needed to be filled. This would offer opportunities to politically active women.

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[384] Ware, *Beyond Suffrage*, 46.

[385] Ware, *Beyond Suffrage*, 46.

[386] Ware, *Beyond Suffrage*, 47.

[387] Ware, *Beyond Suffrage*, 48.

[388] Ware, *Beyond Suffrage*, 58.

[389] Marilyn Gittell and Teresa Shtob, "Changing Women's Roles in Political Volunteerism and Reform of the City," *Signs* 5, no. 3 (1980): 572, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3173807.

The advances of women in government through the New Deal were not entirely lasting changes that impacted Washington. When the New Deal began to wane while facing conservative backlash in the late 1930s, "developments for women followed a similar pattern."[390] While the beginning of the Roosevelt administration saw the growth of the New Deal and, with it, women employed to promote it, the late 1930s saw the constricting of New Deal agencies, and women's roles within them waned. Molly Dewson retired from political work in 1937 due to health reasons. The change the New Deal ushered in for women within government positions was not mirrored in the new emergency facing the country nearly a decade later, World War II. While women did participate in wartime jobs, these jobs were not in positions within the government regarding wartime policy as they had been during the New Deal.[391] The "underutilization of women in Washington during the war" was partially the result of the network of women not recruiting younger women to follow in their footsteps as they stepped down from their roles and entered retirement.[392] The profound mobilization of a group of women who found their voice in politics in the suffrage and labor movements of the Progressive Era was not passed down to the next generation.[393] The prowess and influence of women in politics during the New Deal from a policy-making perspective did not trickle down to the masses. A case study of Camp Tera in Upstate New York tells this story. High-powered and influential women helped create a CCC counterpart, but its impact on changing gender norms or redefining women and labor was minimal.

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[390] Ware, *Beyond Suffrage*, 117.

[391] Ware, *Beyond Suffrage*, 127.

[392] Ware, *Beyond Suffrage*, 130.

[393] Ware, *Beyond Suffrage*, 130.

Labor and Gender:

While the CCC was a celebrated early success of the New Deal to help employ young men, some of the women who were able to influence President Roosevelt used their connections to persuade him to create a parallel agency for the betterment of young and unemployed women. According to historian Neil Maher's text *Nature's New Deal*, the early 20th-century concept of work and gender "viewed men's labor as an inalienable right to be protected, if necessary, by federal action."[394] On the contrary, "women's work was seen more as a family necessity or choice and therefore lay outside the purview of national reform."[395] Historian Alice Kessler-Harris similarly commented on the disparity between the female and male inherent right to work in the United States. She noted that the "rights to work for men could be counted among the fundamental sources of citizenship under liberal theory."[396] However, "a deeply rooted gendered prerogative," intent on "restricting women's work-related rights persisted in custom and law well into the 1960s."[397]

Men in government were reluctant to move forward on plans to employ young women like young men were employed through the CCC. While they felt encouraged to welcome unemployed men into CCC camps, the same was not true for women. "The idea of women living in camps away from family, doing any kind of manual labor, made some

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[394] Maher, *Nature's New Deal*, 82.

[395] Maher, *Nature's New Deal*, 82.

[396] Alice Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity: Women, Men, and the Quest for Economic Citizenship in 20th Century America* (n.p.: Oxford University Press, 2001), 11.

[397] Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit*, 11.

government officials uncomfortable," stated historian Patricia Bell-Scott.[398] She also asserted that men who supported the CCC often felt that a female-equivalent program would "undercut relief for men."[399] Some believed that women were "too temperamental to live together."[400] Other critics thought an all-woman camp would be a "breeding ground for unacceptable behavior, such as homosexuality, and subversive ideas, such as communism."[401]

Therefore, the drive to employ women, despite their continued suffering and lack of employment during the Great Depression, was seen as subordinate to the necessity of employing men. Mrs. Roosevelt's experiences as a young adult investigating sweatshops in New York City left her committed to the country's unemployed women and determined to push through the critics with a pilot program akin to the CCC. Eleanor Roosevelt's commitment to a program for women was "an expression of her compassion, her fierce desire to see the New Deal help women, and her commitment to progressive politics."[402]

The "She-She-She" Camps:

"She-She-She" is a pejorative way of referring to the CCC female counterpart. It was a way critics and skeptics of the program referred to it. Despite the naysayers, the First Lady saw a need for female camps and sought to make them a reality. "Reforestation camps for women, where they can be employed on emergency

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[398] Patricia Bell-Scott, *The Firebrand and the First Lady: Portrait of a Friendship: Pauli Murray, Eleanor Roosevelt, and the Struggle for Social Justice* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2016), 4.

[399] Bell-Scott, *The Firebrand*, 4.

[400] Bell-Scott, *The Firebrand*, 4.

[401] Bell-Scott, *The Firebrand*, 5.

[402] Bell-Scott, *The Firebrand*, 9.

conservation work under the same conditions as men, though in different lines of work, may be established if women in sufficient numbers desire them," expressed First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt in a press conference, as reported by *The New York Times* on May 24, 1933.[403] The female counterpart to the CCC created live-in camps like the men for young women to retreat to and learn transferable skills; however, the actuality of the camp did not live up to the expectation first put forth by the First Lady in May 1933. The purpose and nature of the work and projects offered to the women were vastly different than those provided to the men.

In contrast to the male camps, the camps created for women were run by states with grants from the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), which had been made in 1933. According to the *Report of Resident Schools and Camps for Unemployed Women* compiled by Hilda Worthington Smith in 1934, the following explains how the camps were administered and funded:

> Federal grants were made available by the FERA for salaries of staff, for maintenance of the students, and upkeep of buildings. State or private funds were used for equipment, rental of buildings and organization expenses. College buildings, YMCA or Girl Scout camps, [and] private homes were borrowed by the states for this purpose.[404]

According to Susan Ware, "most Americans did not realize that the government had made a similar effort to set up resident camps for women, but on a drastically reduced scale."[405] Moreover, unlike the men, the women were not paid wages and were only given tiny allowances. The first camp was set up in 1933 by the Temporary

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[403] "Women's Forest Work Camps May Be Set Up If Enough Ask Them, Says Mrs. Roosevelt," *The New York Times* (New York, NY), May 24, 1933, 1.

[404] Federal Emergency Relief Administration, *Report of Resident Schools and Camps for Unemployed Women*, comp. Hilda Worthington Smith (n.p., 1934).

[405] Ware, *Beyond Suffrage*, 111.

Emergency Relief Administration of Roosevelt's home state of New York, a program he established as governor. This was not a large-scale initiative. However, it was a nod to the notion that the women of the Great Depression also needed relief.[406] The nature of the work was entirely different from that of the CCC. Camp Tera trained the young women in domestic skills, not the work of conservation.[407] The program at Camp Tera (later named Camp Jane Addams after the famed settlement-house pioneer of a generation earlier) had "recreational activities, instruction in hygiene and nutrition, experience in the responsibilities of communal living, and some vocational guidance."[408]

Camp Tera Begins:

On June 1, 1933, *The New York Times* noted that a new project was underway: "At the suggestion of Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt, an experimental camp for young unmarried women now out of work, is in the process of establishment in Bear Mountain Park, on the western bank of the Hudson."[409] More specifically, eligibility for the camp was for women who were unmarried, divorced, or widowed, and they had to be residents of New York. Some women were reluctant to enroll because the camps offered no pay and because rumors started to circulate that the camps required hard labor.[410] The camp was located on Lake Tiorati, which today continues to be the home of camps for various groups throughout the summers in Bear Mountain. The space allotted for Camp Tera

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[406] Ware, *Beyond Suffrage*, 111.

[407] Maher, *Nature's New Deal*, 82.

[408] Ware, *Beyond Suffrage*, 112.

[409] "Girls Camp Mapped by Mrs. Roosevelt," *The New York Times* (New York, NY), June 2, 1933, 21.

[410] Bell-Scott, *The Firebrand*, 5-6.

housed twenty-six log cabins, a dining, and a recreation hall.[411] The overseer of camps in Bear Mountain was Ruby Jolliffe. For twenty-eight years, Jolliffe was the superintendent of the Camp Department of the Palisades Interstate Park Commission.[412]

The Poughkeepsie Eagle News later reported that the criteria for acceptance into the camp had been extended to married women: "The extension was ordered…because the camp's governing body believed many women with homes needed a vacation from their difficulties or could profit by the camp's opportunities."[413] The term "vacation" further indicates that the camp's nature strongly contrasted with the CCC counterpart's purpose of work, not vacation. According to a statement by Mrs. Roosevelt and Frances Perkins, the camp was established to house 300 women, hoping to expand that number in the future. The purpose of the camp was said in this joint statement to "'provide healthful employment and useful instruction, amid wholesome surroundings, for needy young women.'"[414] Camp Tera at Bear Mountain would last from 1933 to 1937 and was considered an experimental camp to address the needs of unemployed women.[415]

The Middletown Herald noted the difference between Camp Tera and the CCC. The article also called it a "vacation" for the women.

> Whereas the young men of the [Civilian] Conservation Corps are required to hew their own wood, draw their own water, cook their own food, and police their own camps, besides doing whatever may be necessary to improve the forest preserves

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[411] Thomas W. Patton, "'What Of Her?' Eleanor Roosevelt and Camp Tera," *New York History* 87, no. 2 (2006): 236, Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/23183359.

[412] Press Release, "Ruby M. Jolliffe Retirement," 1948, Palisades Interstate Park Commission Archives.

[413] "Camp Tera to Admit Mothers of Families," *Poughkeepsie Eagle-News* (Poughkeepsie, NY), December 11, 1933, 1.

[414] "Girls Camp," 21.

[415] Ware, *Beyond Suffrage*, 112

> and other public property, the young women recruited for Bear Mountain are merely expected to continue their vacation from their usual employments at Government expense. They need not cook, they need not sew, they need not do anything, apparently, which does not fit their idea of a summer outing.[416]

The article continued by accusing the state relief agency of losing track of the "presidential idea, which is the virtue of required work and duty."[417] While it is accurate to say that the nature of the programs was different, these articles seem to convey a camp whose only purpose was play and leisure, which is inaccurate. The young women of the camp were at the camp to escape the hardship of unemployment, to learn skills, and to be nurtured in a secure space outside of the poverty of urban living. The women were not doing the same type of work as the men and were not getting paid. *The Middletown Times Herald* never held back in its denunciation of the experiment. In December 1933, it criticized the camp: "Camp Tera in Bear Mountain Park…now becomes a winter resort for relief from the responsibilities and harassments of matriarchal duties."[418] The article wrongly accused mothers (the camp was not specifically for mothers) of taking a vacation while fathers dared not do the same while they lived in perpetual fear that their business or job would fail.[419] This newspaper report might be a reflection of the feelings that some people had about the idea of a camp for unemployed women. The newspaper depicts the women as using government money for trivial recreational gain and dismisses the camps as vacations. The educational camp overseer, Hilda Worthington Smith, would paint a much more desperate picture of the girls in her 1934 report on resident camps for

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[416] "The Counterpart," *Middletown Times Herald* (Middletown, NY), June 14, 1933, 2, accessed September 4, 2023, https://www.newspapers.com/.

[417] "The Counterpart," 2.

[418] "Now a Winter Resort," *Middletown Times Herald* (Middletown, NY), December 12, 1933, 2, accessed September 4, 2023, https://www.newspapers.com/.

[419] "Now a Winter Resort," 2.

young women. They were looking for ways to help themselves, not for a vacation away from their families. When observing the camps around the country, she noted how "tragic" the girls looked upon arrival and how interested they were in helping themselves:

> All expressed a strong desire in all discussions for reliable advice on occupations for which they might qualify, vocational training, and the first steps they might take in trying to secure a job. Above all one was impressed with their courage, almost the courage of desperation, in facing an uncertain future, for themselves and their dependents.[420]

The Daily News treated the opening of Camp Tera with a playful headline: "17 Girls Frolic at Mrs. F. D.'s Idle Camp on 1st Day."[421] This is not the same sentiment expressed with the opening of the all-male CCC units. The term frolic suggests trivial and playful, not the terminology one would associate with meaningful and essential relief to address the Great Depression. For many of these young women, an opportunity afforded to them by their government to get off the streets was life-saving. To be sure, terms like "frolic" were not used by *The Daily News* when introducing their readers to the creation of the CCC. Camp Tera started with only 17 enrolled, which would later be addressed with dismay by a visiting Mrs. Roosevelt. The girls were excited upon their arrival, according to the newspaper, and "were delighted to know they wouldn't have to cook or garden and that they'd be given instructions in sewing, typewriting, and other crafts- but all voluntary."[422] They had the option if they wished to "just play and rest."[423] Unlike the CCC, these camps were more of a refuge for desperate, jobless, and homeless women. They were not attending to contribute labor that would help their surroundings or the

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[420] Federal Emergency Relief Administration, *Report of Resident*, 4.

[421] "Mrs. Roosevelt Sees Girls' Camps," *The New York Times* (New York, NY), August 8, 1933, 372.

[422] "Mrs. Roosevelt," 372.

[423] "Mrs. Roosevelt," 372.

nearby community. When the camp was created, it was staffed by an all-female group and was led by Marian Tinker, who was formally the assistant to the dean of women at the University of Pennsylvania.[424]

The Brooklyn Daily Eagle said that recruitment for the camp was easy, but then the task of notifying those accepted was difficult; most of the girls who applied did not have a home address: "So many of them have long since reached the end of their tether. Homeless, jobless, they've been forced to look to the kindness of friends for food and shelter. And in brief, they haven't any address."[425] While some of the applicants withdrew their names when they found out there was no wage being paid to them, those who proceeded were happy to participate in a program that offered them "months of outdoor life."[426] As the title of the article suggests, the camp was a "haven" for unemployed women, not a massive public works initiative that would have a lasting impact on the land or community.[427]

The camp was run and administered by various women. As mentioned, the first woman to be the director of Camp Tera was Miss Marian Tinker, a social worker from Harrisburg, PA. "A background of years of work with women and girls in all parts of the country has ably fitted Miss Tinker for the directorship of this experiment of the First Lady of the Land," reported the *Harrisburg Telegraph.*[428] She had a background in

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[424] "Idle Girls Act Like Prep. School Campers at Experimental Retreat in Mountains," *The Cincinnati Post* (Cincinnati, OH), June 14, 1933, 14.

[425] Isabelle Keating, "Camp TERA Provides Haven for Unemployed Women," *Evening Star* (Washington. D.C.), July 1, 1933, 15, accessed February 5, 2023, https://www.newspapers.com/.

[426] Keating, "Camp TERA," 15.

[427] Keating, "Camp TERA," 15.

[428] "Local Woman Directs Camp," *Harrisburg Telegraph* (Harrisburg, PA), June 26, 1933, 11, accessed November 25, 2023, https://www.newspapers.com/.

education and organization, having been a director of physical education in public schools and civic centers and an executive of the Girl Scouts, the League of Women Voters, and the Y.W.C.A. Throughout many summers, she spent time as a counselor or director of camps along the East Coast.[429]

Eleanor Roosevelt:

The activism of Eleanor Roosevelt was a new brand of First Lady never before seen in the nation's history. She built a trusted staff around her to tend to the typical White House First Lady duties and freed herself up for a tenure of activism beyond the scope of any prior (and maybe subsequent) First Lady. Eleanor "was free to pursue her political and personal interests without devoting undue time to either the household or the endless details of formal Washington."[430] According to Patricia Bell-Scott, Mrs. Roosevelt was turned off by the CCC's militarist organization and segregationist policies.[431] Camp Tera would not be segregated, nor would the military run it. Camp Tera was Mrs. Roosevelt's personal project, and her interest in the venture was evident by her visit to the camp just one week after opening in June 1933. She would end up revisiting the camp in the summer of 1933, three times in 1934, and again in 1937.[432] Mrs. Roosevelt was dismayed by the contradiction that so many applied, yet the camp was serving well under its capacity. According to the *New York Times* of June 19, 1933*:*

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[429] "Local Woman Directs Camp," 11.

[430] Blanche Wiesen Cook, *Eleanor Roosevelt: The Defining Years: Volume Two: 1933-1938* (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), 38.

[431] Patricia Bell-Scott, *The Firebrand and the First Lady: Portrait of a Friendship: Pauli Murray, Eleanor Roosevelt, and the Struggle for Social Justice* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2016), 4.

[432] Patton, "'What Of Her?,'" 231.

> After motoring from Hyde Park today for her first visit to Camp Tera, the camp for unemployed women at Lake Tiorati, near here, Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt expressed keen disappointment upon learning that there were only thirty women at the camp.[433]

Eleanor pushed for red tape barriers to be lifted by the relief agency to encourage more enrollees. By the end of the week, sixty-five more women would be added to the original female attendants. She made an effort to make improvements within the camp, donating to the facility a radio, books, and other items.[434] After her August 1933 visit, Mrs. Roosevelt was pleased that her recommendations to relax some of the criteria for admittance had led to an increase in enrollees. She stated, as cited by *The New York Times:* "'This camp was established to help girls to take care of themselves and to try to find suitable positions for them as the opportunities developed.'"[435]

The girls were eager to greet the First Lady upon her arrival. The young women chronicled Mrs. Roosevelt's August 1933 visit in their weekly *Tera Topics* newspaper publication. "Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt…called upon the campers for an informal visit Monday morning," reported the newspaper.[436] "Driving her 'Eleanor blue' sports roadster…she entered camp rather like a casual, friendly visitor than the First Lady of the Land."[437] The campers considered Mrs. Roosevelt their idol and welcomed her with songs. "She graciously acknowledged the welcome song, but said the girls' thanks should

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[433] "Camp Red Tape Irks President's Wife," *The New York Times* (New York, NY), June 19, 1933, 17.

[434] Cook, *Eleanor Roosevelt*, 89.

[435] "Mrs. Roosevelt Sees Girls' Camps," *The New York Times* (New York, NY), August 8, 1933, 19.

[436] Sara Owen, "Mrs. F.D. Roosevelt Makes Informal Visit to Campers," *Tera Topics*, August 11, 1933, 1.

[437] Owen, "Mrs. F.D.," 1.

go to Miss Frances Perkins, Secretary of Labor, and Mr. Harry Hopkins, member of State and Federal Welfare Council, who brought to realization her dream for sheltering unemployed girls."[438] Mrs. Roosevelt showed a genuine interest in the girls and in what they were learning and their health at Camp Tera. "She seemed very much pleased as the girls expressed their happiness at being in Camp Tera."[439] "She was pleased to see the young women learning to sew and engage in woodcraft classes, learning new skills applicable to jobs in the future."[440]

Mrs. Roosevelt would again visit the camp in February of 1934. The girls waited with great anticipation for their sponsor to arrive. When Mrs. Roosevelt addressed the girls, she told them she believed the worst of the Depression was behind the country. She also addressed the needs of the girls at Camp Tera, encouraging the young women to focus on their health while in Bear Mountain so that when the time arrived to go back to the city, they would be fit, ready, and "in a better position to cope with any difficulties which we may encounter."[441]

In one *Tera Topics* article, the writer entitled "The Captain and the Ship," she metaphorically compared Mrs. Roosevelt to a ship captain, chartering violent waters and steering the vessel safely. The young women of the camp were compared to "shipwrecked lives that had clung to rafts" who had been stranded and holding on to all

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[438] Owen, "Mrs. F.D.," 1.

[439] Owen, "Mrs. F.D.," 1.

[440] Owen, "Mrs. F.D.," 1-2.

[441] "The First Lady of the Land Comes to Camp Tera," *Tera Topics*, March 2, 1934, 1.

hope that they might be saved.[442] "It was the usual case of the survival of the fittest."[443] When the women were rescued, like castaways at sea, they were provided clothing, fed, and supervised by various women overseeing the camp. But the admiral that enabled this to all happen was Mrs. Roosevelt.[444]

Hilda Worthington Smith:

The *Civilian Conservation Corps'* omission of women was not lost on many of the women of the Democratic network. Hilda Worthington Smith was the most influential in assembling a program that paralleled the *Civilian Conservation Corps* for women. In 1933, Mrs. Smith began working as an education specialist for the *Federal Emergency Relief Administration*. She later continued working to promote worker education through the *Works Progress Administration.* In the first year of the Roosevelt presidency, Smith proposed a plan for residential camps for unemployed women. The camps would provide the women with food, shelter, and clothing. Drawing from her background as the Bryn Mawr Summer School for Industrial Workers director in the 1920s, Smith's primary objective was to promote the education of these young women at the proposed residential camps.[445] The camps' goals and objectives differed from those of the CCC, predicated on conservation and physical labor. The only manual work that the women would do would be in the upkeep of the camps. "Hilda Smith considered offering paid work within these

[442] Norma Citron, "The Captain and the Ship," *Tera Topics*, March 2, 1934, 2.

[443] Citron, "The Captain," 2.

[444] Citron, "The Captain," 2.

[445] Ware, *Beyond Suffrage*, 112

camp settings, but could not think how to implement such a scheme- conservation and reforestation were not considered appropriate for women."[446]

Smith worked to train unemployed teachers in 35 states. She also organized schools and camps where 8,000 women would be educated.[447] In a letter to Mrs. Roosevelt in 1940, Smith recalled the schools and saw them as successful, even though many had closed:

> You may remember that about eight thousand girls attended these schools, for periods of two or four months. Approximately a fifth of this number… were enabled to find jobs, following the schools period, with its plan for vocational counseling, and training in homemaking, or in some other line of work.[448]

In that same letter to Mrs. Roosevelt, Smith commented on her hope for women in comparison to what she saw given to the men of the country: "The CCC camps with their millions of dollars for wages, educational work, travel, and supervision constantly remind me of what we might do for women from these same families. As so often the case, the boys get the breaks, the girls are neglected."[449] She reminded the First Lady of the success of the *Federal Emergency Relief Administration* in creating such camps for the "physical and mental rehabilitation of unemployed women…"[450] She called for "an intensive and extensive workers' education program among WPA and relief women…"[451] She also sought to reopen residential centers for unemployed women from 25-40 years

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[446] Ware, *Beyond Suffrage*, 112.

[447] Smith, "Papers of Hilda."

[448] Smith, "Papers of Hilda."

[449] Hilda Worthington Smith to Eleanor Roosevelt, May 14, 1940, accessed November 26, 2023, http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/_resources/images/ersel/ersel089a.pdf.

[450] Smith to Roosevelt.

[451] Smith to Roosevelt.

old with an emphasis on "health education, homemaking, vocational counseling, retraining and workers' education."[452]

Hilda Worthington Smith proposed having camps for unemployed women, and the First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt, enabled Smith to bring that proposal to the president. Mrs. Roosevelt held a White House Conference on Camps for Unemployed Women on August 30, 1934, to propel this proposal into existence.[453] After the conference, Harry Hopkins began to set the process to get the camps underway. With Camp Tera already underway as the first experiment in this endeavor, Hopkins would coordinate with state relief administrators to set forth twenty-eight additional schools and camps for unemployed women in 1934, using state, federal, and private funding to cover various expenses. Smith, as the overseer of these programs, reported on the success of the endeavor for the young female participants, and the programs expanded in 1935, reporting forty-five camps with nearly eighty students in each of them. The programs were put under the direction of the National Youth Administration in that same year, and by 1936, over 5,000 women participated in them. Although the camps reported on the physical and mental benefits for the women, due to Congressional cutbacks to New Deal programs, the project ended in 1937, much to the disappointment of Hilda Worthington Smith.[454] Smith listed several successes in the 1934 report. Listed under general results, the physical gains were notable, according to Smith: "substantial gain in weight in approximately 75% of the students."[455] Job placement occurred for twenty percent of the

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[452] Smith to Roosevelt.

[453] Ware, *Beyond Suffrage*, 112.

[454] Ware, *Beyond Suffrage*, 113-114.

[455] Federal Emergency Relief Administration, *Report of Resident.*

women, even though the camp's goals did not include job placement. Attendees were advised to seek employment while also honing skills related to homemaking due to training done at the facilities. The women also found an increase in their "capabilities of enjoyment through physical activity, dramatics, creative art, handicrafts, and group entertainment."[456] Further, the women were trained in citizenship and group responsibility. Smith concluded that there was an "enthusiastic interest on the part of students, teachers, and state officials in continuing this experiment to meet relief and educational needs."[457] There was a strong sense from what was written in the report that Smith believed in seeing such programs continue and grow to help unemployed and uneducated women of the Depression.

Susan Ware calls the efforts to create camps like these a "token effort to meet the needs of these young women."[458] The numbers do not compare to the CCC, considering 8,500 women to 2.5 million employed men. As Ware notes, it was not so much the outcome of such programs for women that is notable or statistically significant; it is more so the network of women like Hilda Worthington Smith and Eleanor Roosevelt who demonstrated that the social welfare activism of women did help to seek change as part of the New Deal.[459]

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[456] Federal Emergency Relief Administration, *Report of Resident.*

[457] Federal Emergency Relief Administration, *Report of Resident.*

[458] Ware, *Beyond Suffrage*, 114.

[459] Ware, *Beyond Suffrage*, 114.

Pauli Murray:

The contributions of Camp Tera did little to transform the country's landscape as the CCC did. The women did not plant trees, fight mosquitoes, build trails, or stem erosion. But the camp, and those like it, helped the women it served. As the CCC was about bolstering up the young men who served in it physically and intellectually, so too were the camps for women. Camp Tera was not a vacation; it was a refuge that offered opportunities to those who attended. Pauli Murray was one such person. She participated in Camp Tera and afterward had a long career as a notable African-American civil rights activist. The camp was less about the work transforming society as it was about changing the lives of the female enlistees. In a lecture at the University of Mary Washington, author Patricia Bell-Scott called Pauli Murray "one of the most important and least heralded figures in American history."[460] She was a social and legal activist whose legal scholarship helped to lay the groundwork for the *Brown vs. Board of Education* Supreme Court Case.[461] Mrs. Roosevelt and Pauli Murray would be long-lasting friends, and their first interaction began when their paths crossed at Camp Tera in 1934. Although this would be more of a sighting than a meeting, it was an encounter that would resonate with Pauli Murray and later prompt her to reach out to the First Lady. Over time, they exchanged hundreds of letters over decades and would meet to discuss topics ranging from labor to civil rights.

A key source for understanding Pauli Murray is her autobiography, *Song in a Weary Throat: Memoir of an American Pilgrimage.* Pauli Murray was from an

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[460] Patricia Bell-Scott, "Pauli Murray and Eleanor Roosevelt" (lecture, University of Mary Washington, March 29, 2018).

[461] Bell-Scott, "Pauli Murray."

African-American family in Baltimore. She attended Hunter College during the early Depression and was one of four Black women in her graduation program. This would be the first of her six degrees, including 3 law degrees and a doctorate from Yale University.[462] Graduating college in 1933 posed a problem for any person seeking employment. Being a young African woman made the job search even more complicated: "Negroes were limited to elevator and cleaning jobs whether they had a degree or not," stated Murray.[463] She concluded that there were two alternatives for new graduates: working for a relief agency or seeking relief. She heard about the newly inaugurated President Roosevelt's New Deal with skepticism. She saw herself as having few options in the 1932 election, refusing to vote Republican or Democrat. "Having lived under the *apartheid* of Democratic rule in the 'solid South,'" she cast her vote for a Socialist candidate, Norman Thomas.[464] She secured a job with *Opportunity* magazine, an academic journal published by the National Urban League, an African-American organization. After coming down with a bout of pleurisy, a doctor recognized that she needed to rest and take care of her health. The doctor knew about Camp Tera and recommended it to Murray. The prospect of being out in the sun in the outdoors was seen as a panacea for Murray's health struggles. She resigned from her job to fit the unemployed criteria to attend Camp Tera.

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[462] Bell-Scott, "Pauli Murray."

[463] Pauli Murray, *Song in a Weary Throat: Memoir of an American Pilgrimage* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, a division of W.W. Norton & Company, 2018), 120.

[464] Murray, *Song in a Weary*, 120.

Murray recognized the camp as a "female counterpart to the CCC camps."[465] She remarked: "It was little more than a recreational camp for adult women at the time I was there, since it offered no work experience beyond our camp duties and was only one step removed from the dole."[466] It was not the work that inspired her; it was the very nature of the camp. "For me, as for most of the other women in the camp, it provided a sanctuary from the pressures of unemployed city life. It was our first experience of the outdoor camp life that we had missed as children."[467] Moreover, "thanks to the enlightened social policy, it was unsegregated."[468] Murray recognized Mrs. Roosevelt's vested interest in the camp, seeing it as a model for other camps.

Murray's first-hand account offers some insight into camp life. "The camp was ideal for building up run-down bodies and renewing jaded spirits."[469] They slept in "winterized barracks, two women in each room, eating our meals and carrying on other indoor activities in the large main hall."[470] The staff consisted of "well-trained counselors" who "planned a wide variety of recreational pursuits- dramatics, arts and crafts, hiking along marked trails, rowing, and, when winter set in, sledding, skiing, and ice skating."[471] She recalled the involvement of Mrs. Roosevelt as central to the camp's creation: "She [Eleanor Roosevelt] had helped to plan the program, and she looked upon

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[465] Murray, *Song in a Weary*, 123.

[466] Murray, *Song in a Weary*, 123.

[467] Murray, *Song in a Weary*, 123.

[468] Murray, *Song in a Weary*, 123.

[469] Murray, *Song in a Weary*, 123.

[470] Murray, *Song in a Weary*, 123.

[471] Murray, *Song in a Weary*, 123.

Camp Tera as a model for other camps."[472] Murray attributed the outdoor lifestyle of Camp Tera to aiding her physical recovery, gaining weight, and getting over her cough.[473]

Murray called her experience at Camp Tera an "idyllic existence" until, after three months, she had a personality clash with the camp director.[474] The director at the time, Miss Mills, accused Murray of not showing deference to Mrs. Roosevelt upon her visit: "She accused me of showing disrespect for Mrs. Roosevelt by failing to stand at attention when she passed through the corridor."[475] Murray asserted that she saw no need to stand as they were not being formally introduced and meant no disrespect. Mrs. Roosevelt probably recognized Pauli Murray as she was intent on identifying that the camp was indeed racially integrated, which was essential to the First Lady.[476] After this, Murray felt like the camp leaders were heavily watching her. Another tipping point came a few weeks after Miss Mills found a copy of Karl Marx's book *Das Kapital* in Murray's book collection. "This time [Miss Mills] declared angrily that she would not have communists in her camp and that my presence was no longer desirable."[477] Ever the scholar, Murray found it interesting to stay informed on topics of such "international significance."[478] She claims to have never read the book and only had a copy from college when it was once given out as part of a course. This would be the final exchange between Miss Mills and

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[472] Murray, *Song in a Weary*, 123.

[473] Murray, *Song in a Weary*, 123.

[474] Murray, *Song in a Weary*, 125.

[475] Murray, *Song in a Weary*, 125.

[476] Bell-Scott, "Pauli Murray."

[477] Murray, *Song in a Weary*, 125.

[478] Murray, *Song in a Weary*, 125.

Pauli Murray, and her time at Camp Tera was cut short over her disputes with the camp director.

As a Black woman reflecting on the New Deal, Murray recognized the administration's impact on Black people.

> While the numerous federal projects helped many thousands of people for whom the Depression was a calamity, they were a special boon to Negroes living under permanently depressed conditions, who had never had a decent wage and had been shut out of many professional fields that opened to them for the first time through WPA projects.[479]

After leaving Camp Tera, Murray worked for the WPA as a reading teacher for New York City students.[480]

Murray's encounters with the First Lady were not notable while she was at Camp Tera. After she left the camp, a relationship would develop between the two. Murray saw Mrs. Roosevelt as an ally in her fight for African-American civil rights. In 1938, she wrote a letter to the First Lady:

> You do not remember me, but I was the girl who did not stand up when you passed through the Social Hall of Camp Tera during one of your visits in the winter of 1934-35. Miss Mills criticized me afterward, but I thought and still feel that you are the sort of person who prefers to be accepted as a human being and not as a human paragon…I am sending you a copy of a letter which I wrote to your husband, President Roosevelt, in the hope that you will try to understand the spirit and deep perplexity in which it is written, if he is too busy. I know he has the problems of our nation on his hand, and I would not bother to write him, except that my problem isn't mine alone, it is the problem of my people, and in these trying days, it will not let me or any other thinking Negro rest. Need I say any more?[481]

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[479] Murray, *Song in a Weary*, 129.

[480] Murray, *Song in a Weary*, 129.

[481] Pauli Murray to Eleanor Roosevelt, December 6, 1938, Pauli Murray Documents, FDR Library Archives, Hyde Park, NY.

Her letter to the president detailed the plight of the African American people: "I am a Negro, the most oppressed, most misunderstood and most neglected section of your population…"[482] Her over two-page single-spaced letter continued by outlining the challenges and degradation of African Americans. She ridiculed the president for promoting an incomplete standard of liberalism that was not extended to Black Americans. She openly criticized him in the letter for speaking at the University of North Carolina to the audience using language that promoted American liberalism, yet an empty promise to America's Black citizens. Since seeing Mrs. Roosevelt at Camp Tera, she followed the First Lady's activism and saw her as a potential supporter in the civil rights cause. Mrs. Roosevelt ultimately did respond to the letter as documented by Pauli Murray in her autobiography: "I have read the copy of the letter you sent me and I understand perfectly, but great changes come slowly…The South is changing, but don't push too hard. There is a great change in youth, for instance, and that is a hopeful sign."[483] Murray was pleased to hear back from the First Lady but disappointed by the response. This would begin a 25-year friendship that would help to inform both women's views and ideas on race in the United States, growing in their discussions and learning from one another.

Tera Topics:

Tera Topics is a window into the girls' experiences at Camp Tera. The newspaper, printed by and for the girls, is a historical artifact that offers a glimpse into camp life and

[482] Murray to Roosevelt.

[483] Murray, *Song in a Weary*, 146.

the camp's goals. Similar themes are compared to the camp papers seen from the male camps in Teterboro and the Palisades. The girls wrote about patriotism, daily activities, and biographical sketches of the young campers. They wrote poems, brief skits, and informative articles. An overview of who was welcomed into the camp was written on August 11, 1933: "In order to come to our camp, distinctions of religion, race, nationality, color, politics, or education did not matter."[484] In a March 1934 excerpt from *Tera Topics,* one editorial made a similar statement: "Camp Tera, filled with campers of every race, color and creed, gives a golden opportunity to practice courtesy," courtesy being the theme of the editorial.[485]

The most notable inclusion here is the racial integration component, which was not present in the male camps of Bergen County. In February 1934, a *Tera Topics* editorial recalled the role that Camp Tera served in revitalizing the lives of the young women it sheltered: "We, of Camp Tera, surely know what it means to have been given a lift just when everything has looked dark and dismal. We have been taken out of the ranks, and placed in shelter that has brought back the glow of health to many a wan cheek."[486] It concludes by showing gratitude to Mrs. Roosevelt: "Let us extend our heartfelt thanks to Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, the champion of the 'forgotten woman' who has made it possible for us all to enjoy the beauty of nature and to regain our health and spirit."[487] The allusion to Franklin Roosevelt's 1932 "Forgotten Man" address over the radio does not go unnoticed here.

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[484] "Loyalty," *Tera Topics*, August 11, 1933, 3.

[485] Lillian Williams, "Courtesy," *Tera Topics*, March 2, 1934, 2.

[486] Anne Gilbert, "Depression," *Tera Topics*, February 2, 1934, 3.

[487] Gilbert, "Depression," 3.

The Bugle Call started the day early in the morning, and then the day was filled with various activities, both playful and educational. Being situated on a lake in Bear Mountain, the setting was a natural space for hiking and other outdoor activities like boating, ice skating, and swimming. For many girls accustomed to the cityscape, Bear Mountain was a new and unique natural escape. Many articles revolve around the girls' hikes throughout the park. Even on a cold day in February 1934, one camper remarked, "If I believed in magic, I'd make just one wish, - for a winding road that beckons one to roam, and a place like Camp Tera to love and remember always."[488]

The women participated in sewing classes and donated socks and garments to the Red Cross. They engaged in activities like a round-robin baseball tournament with assigned teams and splashed around in water activities on Lake Tiorati. In the wood and camp craft classes, the girls worked on building items like plaques and tin candlesticks. The girls were also exposed to lectures from institutions like the Museum of Natural History. Additionally, they participated in theater activities, singing, and dancing for entertainment.[489]

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When visiting Lake Tiorati in the summer of 2023, there are still reminders of what Camp Tera might have looked like for women in 1933. From day trippers to residential campers, the camp is the quintessential summer retreat. A beautiful lake for swimming and boating with cabins, campfire pits, and old stone buildings in the backdrop of the lush forests of Bear Mountain, New York City feels as if it is a long distance away. The same state park near where President Roosevelt might have

[488] Gilbert, "Depression," 3.

[489] "Departmental Notes," *Tera Topics*, August 11, 1933, 5.

contracted polio would later become home to CCC camps and the experimental Camp Tera.

Camp Tera's goal was not to conserve the land. The more notable takeaway from Camp Tera was the women who created it and their legacy in a changing political climate where women would gain a stronger voice in the government. Camp Tera was a pet project for the First Lady, and neither the idea nor the reality of the camp ever matched the male-equivalent. But the movement of women like Frances Perkins, Hilda Worthington Smith, Mary Dewson, and Eleanor Roosevelt to be able to influence the president of the United States demonstrates a new brand of American women, born out of the suffrage movement and the Progressive Era, motivated to be activists and have a voice in their democracy. The heart of the Progressive Era was in middle-class women who fought for the vote and settlement houses while many worked as social workers and found a voice in the labor movement. When the Great Depression happened, these women found an opportunity to be heard within the Roosevelt administration, albeit in a nominal way compared to the dominance of men.

The camps were recreational refuges for city dwellers who needed assistance and sustenance and to be shown by their government that they were not forgotten. Women like Pauli Murray, who were suffering from the effects of malnutrition, were given a roof over their heads and food for the first time consistently, probably since before the Depression started. Every story of every camp attendee cannot be known. Still, the life of Pauli Murray reflects an essential story of how an integrated camp helped revitalize an individual in the nation's history, and helped to give her the strength to engage in the African-American Civil Rights Movement.

The women motivated to create the camps would continue to find roles in public life to further their various causes, from working in education like Hilda Worthington Smith to working for civil and human rights like Eleanor Roosevelt. The network of women, a term used by Susan Ware, was significantly active in the New Deal and should be noted as an essential step in female activism and civil engagement at the federal level. Camp Tera did not employ millions of women and did not build the country's national parks, but it begins to tell the story of how women who came of age in the Progressive Era found a renewed role in their country's politics through the next generation. Because women were represented in positions in the New Deal, dozens of camps would open around the country after Camp Tera, and start to challenge the gender status quo that had so long existed. That it would be women who fought for this demonstrates the importance of representation within the government of a democracy.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

In 1986, a North Jersey resident named John Moscinski wrote a letter to the editor of *The Bergen Record* reflecting on his time in the CCC half a century earlier. Moscinski, Brooklyn-born, came of age during the Great Depression. The letter, entitled *Revitalize the CCC*, stated that he was the president of Chapter 8 of the National Association of *Civilian Conservation Corps* Alumni. “President Reagan could learn a lesson from Franklin Delano Roosevelt. FDR created the *Civilian Conservation Corps* to strengthen the minds and bodies of young people and to teach them to accept responsibility,” the letter stated.[490] He went on to reminisce about the discipline taught to the young men of the corps. Residing in Little Falls, New Jersey, his obituary from 2011 recalled that he served in WWII after his time in the CCC.[491] Like so many of the men of the CCC who went on to serve in the American military during World War II, Moscinski’s time in the CCC served as a form of preparation for his time in the Army. “The youth of the nation were preserved and when it was necessary to serve our country in time of strife, former CCC members easily moved into positions of leadership to overcome our adversaries,” he wrote.[492] His letter aimed to promote the re-creation of the CCC to better the youth of the day. Mr. John Moscinski was one of the three million CCC workers who responded to the agency's call and served his country as a CCC enrollee and an Army soldier. His hope for a revitalization of the CCC sounds similar to the sentiment expressed by Peter Jacullo.

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[490] "Revitalize the CCC," *The Record* (Hackensack, NJ), April 29, 1986, 14, accessed September 17, 2023, https://www.newspapers.com.

[491] "Obituary John Moscinski," *Passaic Valley Today* (Hackensack, NJ), July 14, 2011, A16, accessed September 17, 2023, https://www.newspapers.com.

[492] "Revitalize the CCC," 14.

Decades later, what is the legacy of the CCC for the nation and the region, and what does it teach us about the country during its years of operation?

From Teterboro to Bear Mountain, the people of New York and New Jersey were challenged to cope with the hardships of the Great Depression. What happened within this nearly fifty-mile stretch of land was indicative of the entire country. Americans were being employed by the federal government to eke out a means of survival. Their growth and preservation were as central to the aims of the public works projects as the work they completed. Yet, within that fifty-mile expanse, what is unique is that the camps were so varied. From a Black camp in Teterboro to a white camp in the Palisades of New Jersey to a female CCC-like camp in Bear Mountain, the experience of its participants tells more than just the story of labor and work. It also tells the story of the people and the nation that employed them. Can conclusions be drawn to better understand the state of the union in the 1930s regarding race and gender based on an evaluation of the CCC? Regarding race, women, and masculinity, it is evident that the CCC offered an opportunity for the country to progress and embrace a more inclusive and enlightened future. However, the tenets of the agency and those who administered it were still deeply rooted in their 1930s views on gender and race.

The New Deal was part of a continuum of government intervention that emerged during the Progressive Era. From Harry Hopkins to Frances Perkins to Mary Dewson, many key players in the Roosevelt administration credited with envisioning the New Deal were young politicians and activists during the Progressive Era. The creation of the New Deal was predicated on the belief that the government is the protector of the people and, in a time of crisis, the government needs to assume an active role in helping its citizens.

Franklin Roosevelt's earliest years in state politics were deep within the time of antitrust suits, the women's suffrage movement, and muckraking journalism. The Progressive Era informally ended almost in line with Roosevelt's withdrawal from public life due to his polio diagnosis. With the conclusion of World War I and the election of three consecutive Republican laissez-faire presidents, America embraced a more conservative path politically for the 1920s. At that time, Franklin Roosevelt mainly was convalescing. His later ascension into the political spotlight as New York Governor and subsequent rise to the presidency shows the legacy of his Progressive Era ideals reemerging through the New Deal. By the day's standard, the New Deal was a radical approach to government, expanding the expectation of how the government interacted with its people during a financial crisis. By today's standards, the New Deal was a work in progress when analyzing ideals of race and gender. The New Deal did not set out to challenge racial or gender norms. In an attempt to gain approval in Congress, the New Deal conformed to standards that maintained the status quo of racial segregation. Ending the Great Depression, staving off political rebellion, and preserving the democratic institutions of the nation were priorities for the Roosevelt administration. While the CCC remained segregated and women were left out of the CCC, there were still opportunities and moments within the agency that started to show small steps in an otherwise lengthy journey toward social change. A group of women with progressive backgrounds were given a voice in the White House to address the topic of female unemployment. A group of all-Black CCC workers came to Teterboro amid resistance and left the community with some people advocating for their acceptance. These seemingly small changes should not be overlooked in the story of gender and race in America.

When the Great Depression consumed this nation in the 1930s, the financial crisis was not the only challenge facing America's Black community. Jim Crow laws, historical oppression, and the Second Coming of the KKK made the times additionally more challenging for Black Americans. Presenting the entire story about race and the New Deal is not the purpose of this study. However, looking at one case study might offer a microcosmic look at race and the CCC. When the Depression hit Bergen County, its demographic makeup had been changing due to immigration. Nevertheless, the Hasbrouck Heights community remained predominantly a white community. It is clear from newspaper articles from the time that some of the town's people sought to maintain the religious, racial, and ethnic makeup of the town. Presumably, Hasbrouck Heights had never seen such an influx of Black people into their town borders as they did when the first trainload of CCC workers came to their station. The fear of changing the racial demographic of a predominantly white town, already resistant to foreign immigration, was glaringly seen in the resistance to the Black CCC camp. But the naysayers did not speak for all. Some writers in *The Bergen Record,* like William Caldwell, recognized the injustice of townsfolk's actions and rhetoric against the Black enrollees. In a county with many Klan cross burnings, marches, and other forms of intimidation, the resistance to a Black CCC camp is not surprising for the time and place. The voices, at least those reflected in the town newspapers, were ultimately quieted as the enrollees proved to be model citizens, and fear of them was unwarranted. The second Black CCC camp to come through Hasbrouck Heights into Teterboro seemed to come and go without racial upheaval. It is possible that the neighboring townsfolk learned that their fears were needless. Nevertheless, the undercurrent of fear of social change was present in the area

and challenged in a new way due to the CCC's segregation policies. For Bergen County, an all-Black CCC camp was confrontational and disrupted the status quo. It forced residents to reckon with social change in a way that had never previously happened.

Few people look back on the CCC and think of its female counterpart. Comparative to the CCC, the female camps were not transformative in a way that led to massive social change. The lasting impact of the CCC cannot be overstated. It still functions in the country's state and national parks in walking trails and park benches. The men drafted into WWII who had served in the CCC found themselves physically prepared, accustomed to a more regimented routine, and willing to defend the country that cared enough to feed, employ, and house them when they were down on their luck. The same cannot be said for the women of the country. The few camps in operation undoubtedly helped the women it served, but the impact was minimal and statistically insignificant nationally. Historian Thomas W. Patton noted the difference between the CCC and the women's camps:

> Even though Camp Tera originated from a suggestion that the Civilian Conservation Corps be replicated for women, it was developed as a much more limited experience than 'Roosevelt's Forest Army.' It clearly demonstrated that unemployed women were not regarded as equal to unemployed men. This reflected the general belief that adult women were not expected to work, but instead were expected to marry husbands who worked.[493]

A trip to Lake Tiorati, where Camp Tera was housed, leaves no reminders of the women who once frolicked on its grounds. Conversely, a trip to the Palisades Interstate Park of New Jersey is a walk-through museum of the work done by the CCC. Retaining walls, trails, and park benches are still reminders of a story of the CCC's work ninety years ago. The government did not employ the women enrolled in the camps, and the women were

[493] Patton, "'What Of Her?,'" 9.

not entrusted with conservation work. The skills they were taught were tied to the traditional gender roles of sewing, cleaning, and housekeeping. There was a curriculum to provide the women with simply a basic education. Hilda Worthington Smith stated:

> …the experiment was an interesting one, worthwhile in its general conception and in the spirit of enthusiasm with which it was carried out. The schools have proved their value in the changed attitudes of the students, in definite gains in health, in creating new courage, and furnishing new opportunities for learning.[494]

While the camps did impact the individual women they housed, the overall impact does not stand out.

The women who fought for the camps to exist stand out more than the camps. Hilda Worthington Smith, Frances Perkins, Molly Dewson, and Eleanor Roosevelt were given roles in the New Deal. The idea of a CCC for women was only envisioned because of their efforts. Still, Franklin Roosevelt's willingness to entertain this idea, albeit not with the same enthusiasm he showed for the CCC, is not without significance. He chose Frances Perkins as his Secretary of Labor and welcomed a female voice in his cabinet.

The CCC was revolutionary in many regards. It employed millions of men, prepared the country for an army, conserved the natural landscape, and made patriots out of the poor and downtrodden. But, like much of the New Deal regarding race and gender, the process was evolutionary, not revolutionary. Camp Tera and other all-female camps like it did not redefine gender roles or shatter the glass ceiling for women. The CCC maintained its segregated units, and the Teterboro Camp reveals the challenges that Black CCC workers in the North confronted. These men were rejected, threatened, and disparaged; they were unfairly placed in a position where their presence caused fear and resentment in the local communities.

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[494] Federal Emergency Relief Administration, *Report of Resident,* 6.

It should be noted that the small scale of the female camps does not discount their potential impact. The case study of Pauli Murray offers historians a rare glimpse into the life of one woman who made her way through Camp Tera. Pauli Murray saw her short-lived experience at Camp Tera as pivotal in her life. Murray was an advocate for broader equality for African Americans and for women, movements that would reach the highest levels of national attention in the 1960s and 1970s. The young women who passed through Camp Tera were coming of age and seeing firsthand the activism of Mrs. Roosevelt. They witnessed their government acting in a way that was beginning to listen to women, maybe not enough to build the CCC for them, but just enough to try out a new project to house, educate, and feed them. The women who passed through Camp Tera were ordinary women. Other than Pauli Murray, it would be difficult to find well-documented materials for any one individual participant. What we do know is that these women enjoyed their experiences at Camp Tera. We can read their words of gratitude for Mrs. Roosevelt in *Tera Topics*. When the Civil Rights Movement came around and these women were now mothers, did they remember the fun they had in an integrated camp in Upstate New York when they were younger? Did they remember how inspired they were by the work of Mrs. Roosevelt and Frances Perkins when the Women's Liberation Movement was gaining steam? Were they part of the New Deal Coalition that cast their vote and expressed their views in a way that was inspired by their experiences in the 1930s? Unless we find diaries, speak with descendents, or come across letters from these women, we cannot be certain. However, if these women did become part of the New Deal Coalition then the little camp in Bear Mountain might be credited

with a ripple effect that lasted longer than the camp did. This can be said for all of the camps that existed around the country.

Eighty-five hundred women might be a small number of participants but those small numbers do not mean inconsequential. The Civil Rights Movement and the Women's Liberation Movement were made up of more than Martin Luther King and Gloria Steinem, respectively. These movements were successful not just because of the people leading the marches but also because of the people who had the fortitude to take a risk and join them. These movements were made up of small clusters and groups of inspired and hopeful followers around the country who joined together for a common cause. The women of Camp Tera might have encouraged their daughters to become educated because the government helped to educate them at Camp Tera. These women might have believed a woman's worth should be respected by the government because the government honored their value when they were brought to Camp Tera. This is not insignificant. This is how movements gather force and make change.

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The camps evaluated in this study, located a short car ride from Franklin Roosevelt's home, are windows into the 1930s. They showcase the men and women of the Great Depression era who reached out to their government for help. The New Deal was administered by many politicians and activists who rejected the preceding administration's laissez-faire approach to the Depression. In the research done for this dissertation, it is my thesis that the CCC was progressive in some regards yet was still restrained by traditional understandings of race and gender. And yet while the creation of the CCC did not lead to an overhaul of racial and gender norms there were moments of

progress within the camps' existence, as seen from the Meadowlands to Bear Mountain. The women in the White House who fought for fellow young women to have the same experiences as young men, the segregated unit of CCC men in Teterboro who served their mission despite the prejudice that surrounded them, and the young white boys who overcame their poverty by building the Palisades, are part of the New Deal story. Moreover, these stories and moments participate in the greater narrative of the United States about the ever-evolving climb to a more perfect union as men and women of different racial backgrounds entered into a unique experiment of government intervention. Over time, the military would be integrated, segregation would be dismantled, and women would make gains in the workforce. Females who take on political roles will forever stand on the shoulders of Frances Perkins. But like most movements towards greater equality, the evolution can only be seen with time. Ninety years after the creation of the New Deal and the establishment of the CCC agency, we can discern these seemingly modest initiatives, mobilizations, and advocacy efforts as integral components within the continually evolving movement toward gender and racial equality. The CCC, therefore, participates as another chapter in the national script that began with the hope of creating a more perfect union and is ever-evolving.

Going Beyond:

As historians go beyond the macro study of the New Deal they will find themselves delving deeper into the micro aspects of it. This might bring them to a CCC camp in their own backyard, as it did for the author of this study. The history of the CCC has been told and retold from the top down. There is a new opportunity to start to

understand the story from the bottom up. The challenge comes with each passing day and the loss of our greatest resource in learning about the CCC, the men (and women) themselves. However, they have descendants. If a man or woman was part of these agencies and passed their stories down, then historians can research these stories and preserve them. With every passing generation, the CCC fades into a distant memory. Where are the diaries, the letters, and the memories of the women of Camp Tera? This paper identified the names of the men who were part of one of the all-Black CCC camps in Teterboro. We need to find their children and grandchildren and learn about the life they led after the CCC. What were their politics, beliefs, and life experiences after the Great Depression and how might their time in the CCC have contributed to these? This paper included the contributing narrative of Peter Jacullo who offered stories from his memory; who else has stories to offer and can they be found and preserved? Locating relatives would be a worthwhile project to further extend and broaden the study of the CCC and other New Deal agencies in Bergen County. Were the findings of this study indicative of other camps around the country? Evaluating camps in other regions through the lens of those who participated in them, would help to explore if the findings in this project were similar to camps around the country.

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VITA

Full name: Leah Jerome

Place and date of birth: Ridgewood, New Jersey, January 7, 1985

Parents' Names: Louis Jerome and Judy Jerome

Educational Institutions:

School	Place	Degree	Date
Secondary:	Glen Rock High School	High School Diploma	June 2003
Collegiate:	Fordham University The Bronx, NY	Bachelor of Arts	May 2007
Graduate:	Fordham University Graduate School of Education New York, NY	Master of Science in Teaching Social Studies	August 2009
	Drew University Caspersen School of Graduate Studies Madison, NJ	Doctor of Letters	May 2024