



Roosevelt's TREE ARMY

On May 2, 1933, two hundred young men from Detroit arrived at an **isolated** spot in the Hiawatha National Forest, west of Sault Ste. Marie. They set up tents and called the area Camp Raco. Within months many other similar camps were scattered all across northern Michigan.

The Civilian Conservation Corps had come to Michigan.

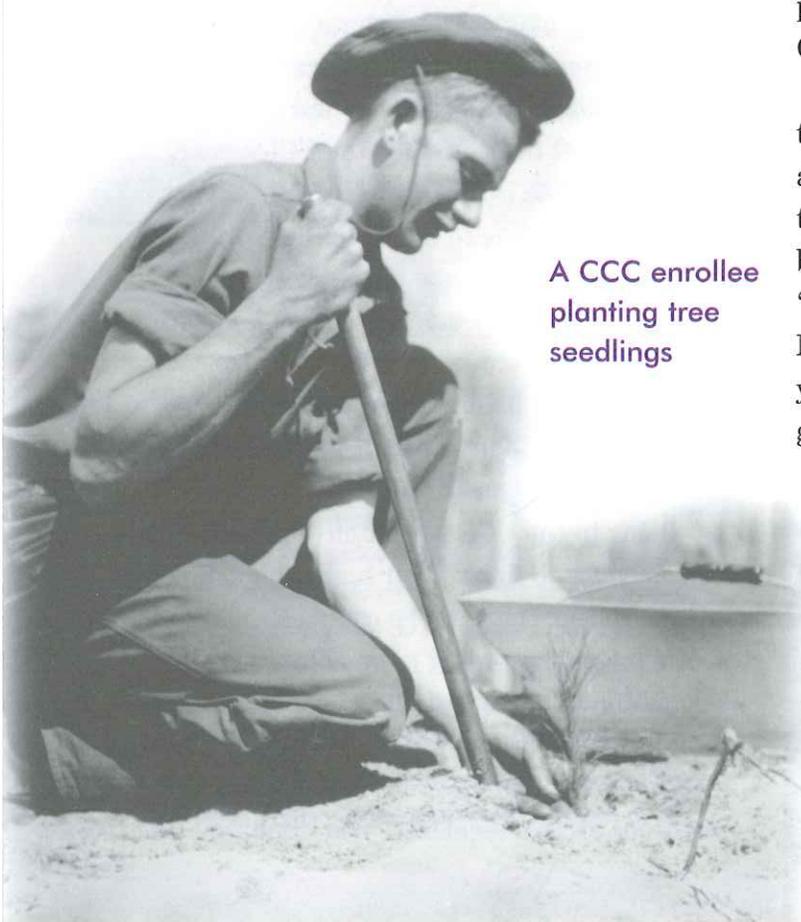
During the early 1930s the nation's economy tumbled, leaving millions of workers unemployed. In New York, Governor Franklin Delano Roosevelt introduced a program where unemployed men worked for the government planting trees. When he became president, Roosevelt proposed a similar program called the Civilian Conservation Corps.

The Civilian Conservation Corps, also called the CCC, was designed to improve the economy and help the needy. President Roosevelt believed the CCC would return the country to its "former beauty" and allow the unemployed to work in "healthful surroundings." This was true in Michigan. Between 1933 and 1942 thousands of young Michiganders restored the land that loggers had left behind as barren **wastelands**.

Most of the men who enrolled in the CCC were between seventeen and twenty-three years old. They were unmarried, unemployed, and not in school. They were in good health and capable of doing physical labor.

"CCCers," as the enrollees were nicknamed, each received a set of clothes that included shoes, socks, underwear, a blue

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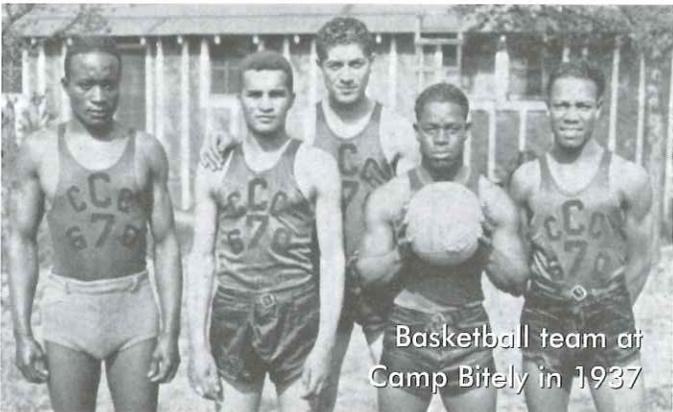
A CCC enrollee planting tree seedlings



Fighting fires to preserve Michigan's forests



Barracks at Camp Au Train near Munising in the U.P.



Basketball team at Camp Bitely in 1937



Musical entertainment after work at Camp Hale

denim work suit, and an old army uniform for dress purposes. They also received a toilet kit, a towel, a mess kit, a steel cot, a cotton mattress, and bedding. Enrollees were paid \$30 a month. Each man kept 5 dollars and sent 25 dollars home to help support his family.

At first, CCC camps were tent cities. As winter approached, permanent structures were constructed. These camps included several **bar-racks**, a **mess hall**, a bathhouse and **latrine**, and other service buildings. All the buildings were quite simple. They had electricity, but the lighting was poor.

The U.S. Army helped run the CCC. However, there was no military drill or discipline.

Enrollees began their day with **reveille** at 6:00 A.M. **Calisthenics** were followed by breakfast. The men spent all day working. They returned to camp in the late afternoon where they either attended classes or visited nearby communities. Lights were out at 10:00 P.M.

The CCC worked in national and state forests. They planted seedlings and worked to end tree diseases. The CCCers fought forest fires and built roads, trails, towers, and firebreaks to prevent forest fires. In 1936 the CCC fought massive fires on Isle Royale in western Lake Superior. According to one observer, without the efforts of the CCC "some of the finest scenic spots on the island would have been laid bare."

The CCC improved hundreds of miles of Michigan's best fishing rivers and streams, conducted many wildlife projects, and worked in Michigan's state parks.

Being in the CCC wasn't all work. Enrollees had a chance to finish their high school diplomas or take college classes. The camps also fielded sports teams. According to one observer, the Camp Manistique baseball team "played high class baseball." CCCers at Camp Walkerville held weekly boxing matches that drew crowds of hundreds of area residents. The camp sent one



U.S. CCC
C.C.C.

of its members to fight in the Golden Gloves Tournament in Chicago. Camp Escanaba River enrollees even had an orchestra that performed on the local radio station.

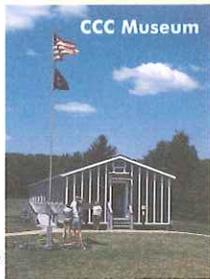
The Civilian Conservation Corps ended in June 1942. Its accomplishments were amazing. Nationally, more than three million men joined the CCC. More than 100,000 young men joined the Michigan CCC. They planted almost 500 million trees—more than twice as many as in any

other state. They developed Isle Royale National Park and the Seney National Wildlife Refuge, revitalized the Michigan State Park system, and sent 20 million dollars home to their families.

The CCC improved the **morale**, health, and education of many young men. It also gave them some military experience that benefited those men who joined the armed forces during World War II.

Finally, as President Roosevelt once noted, the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps received “the admiration of the entire country.” Today, the efforts of the CCC can still be seen and enjoyed in Michigan’s state parks and national forests.

Where to Take Your Family



Roger L. Rosentreter

The **Civilian Conservation Corps Museum** has indoor and outdoor exhibits. CCC alumni donated to the museum many photographs and artifacts that depict the workers’ day-to-day lives and accomplishments. The museum, located fifteen miles south of Grayling along Roscommon Road in North Higgins Lake

State Park, is open Memorial Day through Labor Day. Telephone (517) 373-3559, TDD (800) 827-7007 or visit www.michiganhistory.org.

Visitors can still explore buildings the CCC built at several Michigan state parks.

Ludington State Park’s bathhouse, a limestone picnic shelter at **Indian Lake State Park** near Manistique, and a fieldstone caretaker’s residence at **Wilson State Park** near Harrison are all still in use. The campground at **J. W. Wells State Park**, thirty miles south of Escanaba, is where a CCC camp once stood. There, CCC members constructed stone buildings, built water and sewage systems, landscaped areas, and cleared trails. **Hoefft State Park** near Rogers City has a CCC-



Ludington

built bathhouse made of stone and logs. The next time you visit a state park, ask a ranger if the CCC worked in the area. For information on Michigan’s state parks, visit the Department of Natural Resources website, www.michigan.gov/dnr.

The men of CCC Company 3626 established the **Seney National Wildlife Refuge** near Seney in the Upper Peninsula in 1935. These members of Camp Germfask transformed 95,000 acres of marshland into a home for migrating birds. A system of dams, spillways, ditches, dikes, and pools was built, and hundreds of acres of millet, celery, and wild rice were planted as food for birds. For information, telephone (906) 586-9851 or visit <http://midwest.fws.gov/Seney>.

The CCC saved **Isle Royale** from complete destruction when fires swept across the island in 1936. CCC camps were established at what are now Daisy Farm, Windigo, and Siskiwit Bay. Besides firefighting, other CCC projects included bringing moose to the island and constructing the park headquarters on Mott Island. For information on visiting Isle Royale National Park, telephone (906) 482-0984 or visit www.nps.gov/isro.



Isle Royale

Roger L. Rosentreter

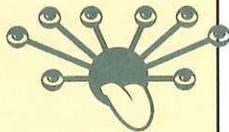
What Did You Learn?

BONUS:

What island did the CCC fight fires on?

- Grosse Ile
- Mackinac Island
- Isle Royale

Vocabulary WORDS



Barracks: a large building for housing people

Calisthenics: exercise

Isolated: cut off from others

Latrine: toilet

Mess hall: building where meals are eaten

Morale: the state of a person's spirit or attitude

Reveille: sounding a bugle in the morning to wake people

Wasteland: land that is empty, torn up, and/or useless

1. Who proposed the Civilian Conservation Corps?

- Governor Franklin Delano Roosevelt
- President Franklin Delano Roosevelt
- General Franklin Delano Roosevelt

2. Which of the following did enrollees NOT do?

- plant trees
- play baseball
- knit clothing
- take classes

3. Where can you see the impact of the CCC today?

- on billboards along highways
- at Michigan's state parks
- in factories and office buildings

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Find the following CCC words

BARRACKS
 CCC
 CONSERVATION
 ISLE ROYALE
 UNEMPLOYED
 FORESTS
 ROOSEVELT
 SEEDLING