

THE CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS IN BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK

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During the New Deal, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) put young men to work in state and national parks across the United States. One of such parks, Big Bend National Park, is the focus of this study. The CCC had two camps within the park, one from 1934 to 1937 and another from 1940 to 1942. During their time in Big Bend, the CCC constructed many projects including a road, trails, cabins, and other various structures. The purpose of this study is to delineate the role of the CCC in creating Big Bend National Park and the experience of the CCC during their time in the Big Bend camp. This study determines the role of the CCC through a discussion of the planning done by the CCC for Big Bend National Park and the work completed by the CCC in the park. In doing so, it argues that the CCC played a substantial and significant role in the development and character of the park. This study works to understand the experience of the CCC in Big Bend through a discussion of education, safety, and an investigation of a commanding officer. Through this discussion, the role of the federal government and national organization in the local camps can be seen, as can the value they placed in the enrollees.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On October 29, 1929, the stock market crashed and sent the United States into the Great Depression. With unemployment nearing twenty-five percent in 1932, desperate Americans looked for viable solutions. The incumbent president, Herbert Hoover, did little in their minds to fix the problems at hand, which caused the American voters to turn to a new candidate, Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR). FDR, knowing the people needed a solution, touted his platform, a New Deal, as the way to pull the nation out of the economic crisis. The New Deal would use the power of the federal government to help the “Forgotten Man,” bringing relief and economic reform to the nation.

FDR held true on his promises of a New Deal and took immediate action upon his inauguration as president. During his first 100 days in office, FDR took unprecedented actions and pushed fifteen major bills through Congress, all of which worked to right the wrongs of the Great Depression. FDR’s actions were so successful that his first 100 days have become a standard of measurement for presidents ever since. From closing and restructuring the banks to creating work relief programs, FDR acted on his promise to the nation – giving them a New Deal.

One of the many ways FDR worked to rebuild the economy was through legislation such as the Relief of Unemployment Through the Performance of Useful Public Work and for Other Purposes Act that established the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). FDR had toyed with ideas of conservation efforts beginning with his time as governor of New York, just before his terms as president.¹ While governor, he used state lands for reforestation projects to put young men back

¹ For information on FDR and his views on conservation, see Douglas Brinkley, *Rightful Heritage: Franklin D.*

to work – fixing the land and employing men. Now, the CCC offered him the opportunity to bring these ideas to a national scale and provide employment at the same time. Not only would the CCC provide meaningful work to young men in reforestation, soil conservation, and flood control efforts, but it would help to reclaim the land that Americans seemed to be losing quicker than they could fathom. With the Dust Bowl ravaging 100 million acres of American land, blowing away an average of 408 tons of soil from each acre, over 3.5 million Americans were displaced from their farms, making FDR’s conservation efforts more necessary than ever before.² More important, since no one had been making an effort to do so earlier, not only were these jobs necessary, but they would be *new* jobs – building employment where none had been before.

The CCC, though the intricacies varied throughout the years, had the simple goal of employing young men in parks across the United States. By employing young men, generally aged 18 to 25, in state and national parks for \$30 a month, the CCC sought not only to embrace conservation efforts but to help draw the nation out of the Great Depression. The CCC would provide its enrollees not only with employment but three meals a day and opportunities for educational betterment – things that were increasingly difficult to come by during the Great Depression. Additionally, in an effort to stimulate the nation’s economy, the enrollees were only able to keep a small portion of the \$30 they earned each month. Considering the isolated location of many parks, had they kept the majority of their salaries, the money would have been more likely saved than spent. Instead, the majority of each enrollee’s wages was sent to their families, in an attempt to stimulate the economy as a whole. Not only would the economy be supported

Roosevelt and the Land of America (New York: Harper Perennial, 2016).

² Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains In the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 29, 49.

through the enrollee's newfound incomes, but the CCC would buy supplies, namely food and building materials not readily available within the parks, from the surrounding communities, giving a second stimulus to the economy.³

Throughout its duration, 1933 to 1942, the CCC employed more than two million men in 198 CCC camps in national parks and monuments and 697 camps in 881 state, county, and municipal parks across the nation. The Army oversaw the camps themselves, mainly due to their ability to “manage men and materiel on a mass scale and on short notice.”⁴ An Army officer ran the camp in the position of commanding officer, although his authority did not extend to the worksite. The actual work and worksites of the CCC fell under the jurisdiction of technical service agencies – broadly, organizations such as the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, and Forest Service. In charge of the projects, their planning, and their execution, the camp superintendent existed as the CCC's administrator in the camp. Primarily a civilian organization, as the name implied, the CCC was mainly overseen by civilians. Only responsible for such tasks that needed an organized structure already in place, the Army had no say on the work being done by the CCC. Instead, the Army functioned to keep the CCC camps in order and running smoothly.⁵

³ For information on the CCC, see Melissa Bass, *The Politics and Civics of National Service: Lessons from the Civilian Conservation Corps, VISTA, and AmeriCorps* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2013); Neil M. Maher, *Nature's New Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); John C. Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Park Service, 1933-1942: An Administrative History* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1985); John A. Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1967).

⁴ Bass, *The Politics and Civics of National Service*, 39.

⁵ This additional information came from Bass, *The Politics and Civics of National Service*; Maher, *Nature's New Deal*; Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Park Service*; Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*

During their time in the camps, CCC enrollees, through their manual labor, effectively changed and shaped the landscapes in which they worked. The parks where they were stationed were either wholly created by them, with the park infrastructure being built for the first time by CCC labor, or were substantially developed, based on the influx of available labor allowing for significant projects to be undertaken. The parks, however, were not the only things transformed by the CCC; the enrollees themselves changed as well. Enrollees were fed and worked forty hours a week doing manual labor, physically transforming their bodies. Additionally, the CCC provided enrollees with educational opportunities, allowing the enrollees to alter their situation by providing them traditional and vocational education. In doing so, the CCC not only changed the lives of its enrollees, but they also shaped the parks they worked in, effectively changing the American landscape.⁶

A good example of the impact of the CCC is Big Bend National Park in Texas. Texas at the start of the New Deal (1933) had a fledgling state parks system and regarded the CCC as a source of development as well as employment for its residents. Desperate for funds and employment, Texas turned to the federal government and the CCC as a solution for some of the plagues it was facing in the Great Depression. For example, in 1927, just six years before the start of the New Deal, Texas had twenty-seven sites within its state park system. By the end of the New Deal, approximately fifteen years later, there were forty-four sites within the Texas State Park System and a new national park. Despite the seeming lack of park land at the beginning of the New Deal, Texas remained undeterred and jumped at the opportunity for an influx of cash and employment. Texas built itself a state park system through the funds and labor

⁶ This additional information came from Bass, *The Politics and Civics of National Service*; Maher, *Nature's New Deal*; Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Park Service*; Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*.

of the New Deal – namely through programs like the CCC, the Works Progress Administration, and Public Works Administration. To many, Big Bend, an oasis left seemingly untouched and prime for development, appeared an excellent opportunity for New Deal funds through the CCC.⁷

Big Bend remained largely unsettled even by the 1930s. It was not until the early 1880s that settlement became a serious possibility; prior to that time, Native Americans still had a substantial grip on the area and railroads had yet to reach the Big Bend. One of the first groups to settle the region were ranchers, taking advantage of the natural conditions suitable to cattle ranching. Though some settlers arrived in the region as early as 1854, most did not come until the 1880s, following the completion of the railroad. The other enterprise in the region was mining, mainly quicksilver. Big Bend, however, was still sparsely populated – at the time of land acquisitions during the New Deal, only fifty-five people lived within the proposed park area.⁸

Left largely unsettled, Big Bend remained undeveloped and a site of pristine beauty. In the far corner of West Texas, where the Rio Grande takes a turn, the Big Bend was what some would later call a “unique lodestone.”⁹ It is “the most representative example of the Chihuahuan Desert ecosystem in the United States.” From the highest point at Emory Peak (7,832 feet) to the lowest along the Rio Grande (1,850 feet), Big Bend contained scenic beauty, provided an opportunity to experience and appreciate nature.¹⁰ After a visit to the proposed park in 1935,

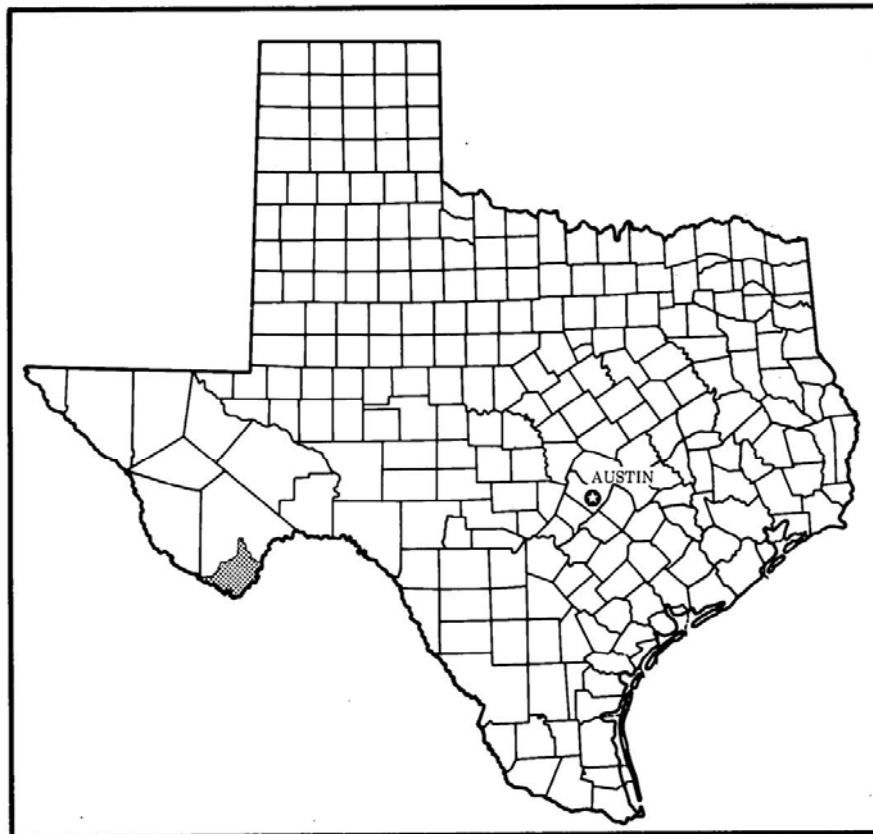
⁷ For information on the CCC in Texas, see James Wright Steely, *Parks for Texas: Enduring Landscapes of the New Deal* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999).

⁸ Ron C. Tyler, *The Big Bend: A History of the Last Texas Frontier* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2010).

⁹ Barry Scobee, “Sun, Solitude, and Scenery Prevail Every Day in the Big Bend Country of Texas Where the Nation’s Most Unique National Park is Being Developed,” *Alpine Avalanche*, December 27, 1935.

¹⁰ “Big Bend Fact Sheet,” Big Bend National Park, National Park Service, accessed March 7, 2019, <https://www.nps.gov/bibe/learn/management/statistics.htm>.

other National Park included a complete mountain, offering life zones from Lower Sonoran, through Upper Sonoran and Transition, to Canadian, with their gamut of changing flora and fauna.”¹¹ While important, and certainly unique to Big Bend (as it is the only National Park to contain a mountain range entirely), perhaps most importantly during the 1930s, the area represented untapped resources and future development.¹²



Location of Big Bend National Park in Texas.

Figure 1: Map showing location of Big Bend National Park in Texas. Rex Cochran & Jerry L. Rives, Soil Survey of Big Bend National Park: Part of Brewster County, Texas (Washington, DC, 1985) texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth130268/m1/10/?q=Big%20Bend%20map, accessed March 8, 2019, University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, crediting UNT Libraries Government Documents Department.

¹¹ “National Park Service Committee Makes Tour of Big Bend Park Area,” *Alpine Avalanche*, August 16, 1935.

¹² “A Handbook for New Volunteers: Volunteers-In-Parks Program” (Big Bend National Park, Big Bend, Texas: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service), 3.

A site of seemingly unsettled and open land, as well as unrivaled scenic wonders, Big Bend appeared to be an opportune site for park development, and thus CCC funds, though Texas would need more than just ideas to set such a park in motion. When Texas entered the United States in 1845, the state kept all its public lands – leaving no opportunity for the development of a national park following the customary route. Robert Wagstaff of Abilene, Texas (a Texas State Representative from 1931 to 1935) became inspired to set aside the lands in Big Bend for such a park after reading an article on explorations along the Rio Grande. It was then that he approached Everett Ewing Townsend, former sheriff of Brewster County and current State Representative, to bring the matter to the Texas legislature.¹³

Big Bend first received designation as a state park in 1933 – originally named Texas Canyons State Park. With this designation came a CCC camp (SP-33) in the spring of 1934, and the CCC stayed in Big Bend through the end of 1937. Big Bend was also briefly designated as a drought relief camp, DSP-1, from July 1934 to March 1935. Though the creation of Big Bend State Park brought the CCC and development to the area, this was not enough for some. Texas politicians, like Townsend and Robert Ewing Thomason, pushed for Big Bend as a national park, seeing the economic opportunities that would come with the designation. In 1935, the federal government authorized Big Bend as a national park – pending the acquisition and donation of all the lands in the proposed park by the state. It is with the imminent establishment of a national park in Big Bend that a CCC camp was again established in January 1940 (NP-1). This CCC camp remained in Big Bend until March 1942, when the CCC shut down as World War II effectively ended the New Deal and its programs.¹⁴

¹³ Robert M. Wagstaff, “Beginnings of the Big Bend Park,” *The West Texas Historical Association Yearbook* 44 (1968).

¹⁴ For information on the history of Big Bend, see John R. Jameson, *Big Bend of the Rio Grande: Biography of a National Park* (New York: P. Lang, 1987); John R. Jameson, *Big Bend National Park: The Formative Years* (El



Figure 2: Map of Big Bend National Park in West Texas including major roads. The blue circle denotes the Basin area of the park. Map from: Maps, Big Bend National Park, National Park Service, accessed March 8, 2019, <https://www.nps.gov/bibe/planyourvisit/maps.htm>.

Each CCC camp in Big Bend was located in the Basin area of the park, nestled in the Chisos Mountains. Though other camps were proposed along the Rio Grande, near Santa Helena Canyon, these were ultimately rejected due to a lack of reliable water sources. During its tenure in Big Bend, the CCC completed a number of projects including the Green Gulch Road, several trails, cabins, and other buildings, as well as a water system and well to sustain the camp and future park development. Ultimately, the CCC built the park from nothing, as little development existed in the park before their arrival. This, in turn, laid the groundwork for Big Bend National Park as it exists today; many of the projects remain in use and the plans set forth by the CCC are

Paso: Texas Western Press, 1980); John Jameson, *The Story of Big Bend National Park* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015); Ross A. Maxwell, *Big Bend Country: A History of Big Bend National Park* (Big Bend National Park: Big Bend Natural History Association, 1985); Ross A. Maxwell, *The Big Bend of the Rio Grande: A Guide to the Rocks, Geologic History, and Settlers of the Area of Big Bend National Park* (Austin: Bureau of Economic Geology at The University of Texas, 1968); Steely, *Parks for Texas*; Tyler, *The Big Bend*; Michael Welsh, *Landscape of Ghosts, Rivers of Dreams: A History of Big Bend National Park* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2002).

seen in the modern park. In the end, the CCC during its time in Big Bend left its mark, and legacy, upon the land.

In the existing historiography, little attention has been given to the impact of the CCC in Big Bend's development. The most substantial work on the CCC, John A. Salmond's *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study*, is an administrative history of the CCC, giving little attention to the work done by the CCC in individual parks. Similar trends can be seen in Melissa Bass's work, *The Politics and Civics of National Service: Lessons from the Civilian Conservation Corps, VISTA, and AmeriCorps*, and John C. Paige's *The Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Park Service, 1933-1942: An Administrative History*. Though these exclusions can be understood, as these are all national studies, these discussions are still lacking in more focused state accounts as well.¹⁵

There are two main works on the CCC in Texas, James Wright Steely's *Parks for Texas: Enduring Landscapes of the New Deal* and Cynthia Brandimarte's *Texas State Parks and the CCC: The Legacy of the Civilian Conservation Corps*. Steely provides an overarching account of the CCC's role in creating Texas's state park system. While Steely does discuss developments in Big Bend, his *Parks for Texas* is an administrative history and largely ignores the on-the-ground operations of the CCC in Texas, including the work at Big Bend. Brandimarte's work, however, completely excludes Big Bend. Big Bend's complex history can justify this omission because it was designated as a state park in 1933 and later was authorized as a national park in 1935, but the fact remains then that a history of the CCC in Big Bend is lacking.¹⁶

¹⁵ Bass, *The Politics and Civics of National Service*; Maher, *Nature's New Deal*; Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Park Service*; Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*.

¹⁶ Steely, *Parks for Texas*; Cynthia Brandimarte, *Texas State Parks and the CCC: The Legacy of the Civilian Conservation Corps* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2013).

Understandably, Big Bend National Park is absent from national accounts of the CCC and perhaps from accounts of the CCC in Texas as well. In specific histories of the Big Bend region, however, it is more difficult to justify such omissions. Ron C. Tyler's *The Big Bend: A History of the Last Texas Frontier* dedicates but a few paragraphs to the work of the CCC in the park, focusing instead on political and land acquisition efforts. Similarly, John Jameson's *The Story of Big Bend National Park* overlooks the CCC to give more attention to the failed efforts of an international peace park with Mexico.¹⁷

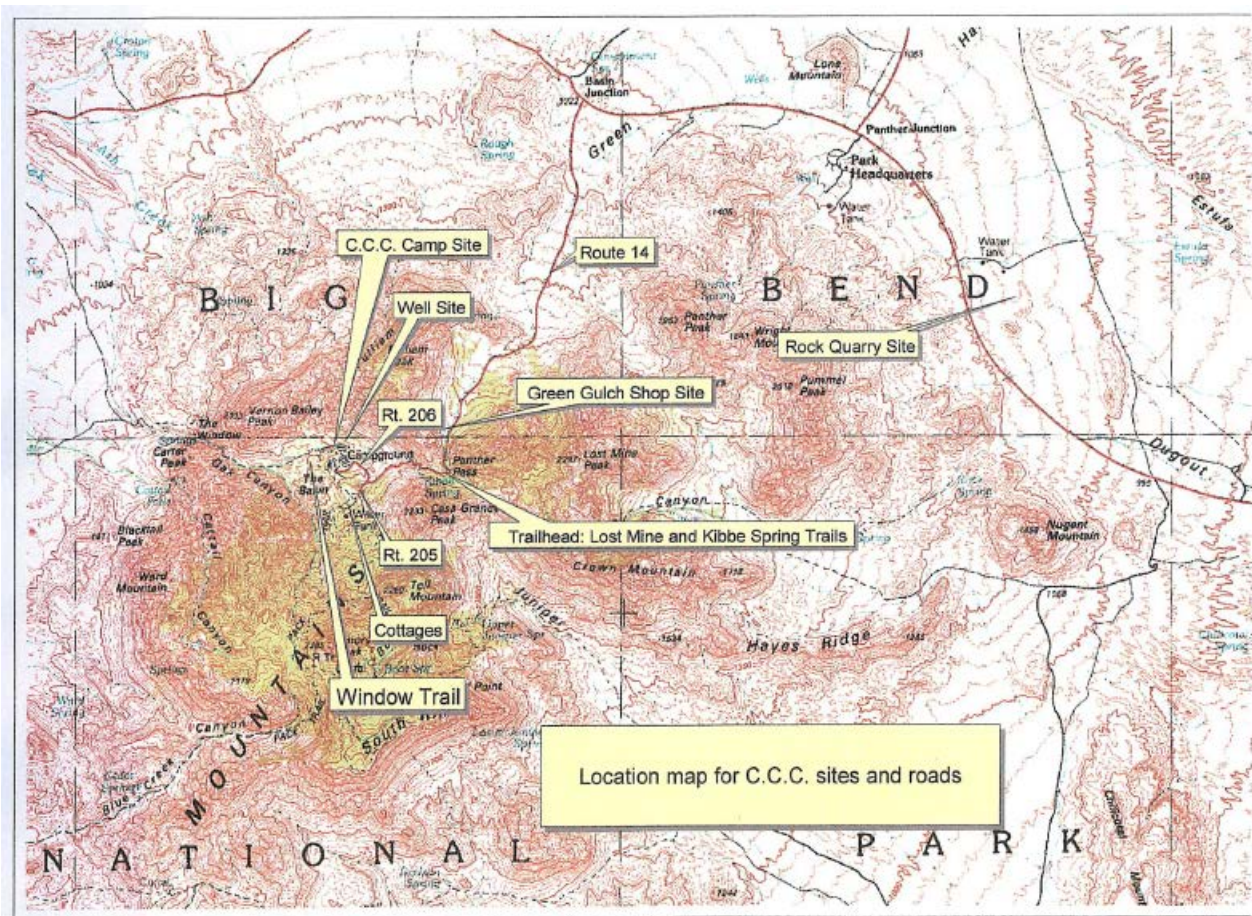


Figure 3: Map of work of the CCC in Big Bend. Although this map does not show all of the projects undertaken by the CCC, it does include most of them. Thomas C. Alex, *A Short History of the C.C.C. Road Construction in the Chisos Mountains and Description of Contributing Elements for a National Register C.C.C. Cultural Landscape* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, July 2000).

¹⁷ Jameson, *The Story of Big Bend National Park*; Tyler, *The Big Bend*.

This study seeks to detail the seemingly forgotten history of the CCC in Big Bend, using it as a case study of the CCC in two ways. One, it works to understand the role of the CCC in the development of Big Bend National Park. Without the work of the CCC, the park would not exist in the manner it does – some could contend that without the CCC the park may not even exist due to a lack of interest and funding, though that is not the focus of this study. Two, it looks to use Big Bend as a window into understanding how the CCC worked on a local scale. By looking at the many enrollees' experiences in Big Bend, the larger goals of the CCC can be examined. Additionally, in understanding how the camp at Big Bend functioned, a more detailed history of the CCC as an organization can be provided. As such, the role of the CCC is integral to Big Bend and its development, and this study works to give a detailed account of its history in the park.

In order to best accomplish these goals, this study is split into two parts. The first part, chapter 2, works towards the first goal – the role of the CCC in creating Big Bend National Park. Part of this discussion works to better understand Big Bend in the context of national park development in the 1930s. The CCC worked in national parks including Acadia, Grand Canyon, Olympic, and many more. In national parks, the CCC built projects to the same standards as they would have in Big Bend. Although the character of these projects may have varied, parks with similar characters would subsequently have similar construction methods and projects. In this manner, Big Bend functions as a case study for the work performed by the CCC in national parks. At the same time, Big Bend was one of two national parks authorized during the New Deal, had CCC work done in the park, and promptly became a national park following the end of the New Deal, the other being Everglades National Park.¹⁸ It is important to note, however, that

¹⁸ Big Bend National Park was authorized in 1935 and established in 1944. In a similar manner, Everglades National Park was authorized in 1934 and opened in 1947. Both Big Bend and Everglades had CCC camps which completed work in the parks. See Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Park Service* and *The National Parks: Index 1916-2016* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2016).

the work completed in Big Bend and Everglades were characteristically different based on the environments where they occurred – deserts and mountains are inherently different from a swamp. In this sense, Big Bend National Park was unique from other national parks in the timing of its development and the clear role the CCC thus had in its establishment.¹⁹ The two chapters in part one of this study work to better understand the role of the CCC in creating Big Bend National Park, what aspects of this are unique, and what aspects align with the larger goals of the National Park Service at the time.

Chapter 2, “Planning a Park,” discusses the plans for development. Big Bend was developed with several goals in mind, namely, tourism and employment (initially through the CCC). These goals are highlighted through the discussions found in Texas newspapers during the 1930s and 1940s, as well as the records of the CCC itself. Through these sources, it can be seen that the CCC worked to create Big Bend in such a way as to appeal to tourists and meet the needs and expectations of a national park, in containing and protecting the resources. Chapter 3, “Building a Park,” expands upon these ideas, detailing the history of the CCC and its various work projects in Big Bend. This chapter, instead of focusing on the plans, examines the execution and results of these projects throughout the CCC’s time in Big Bend. These two chapters work to detail the ideas behind the development of Big Bend, what the CCC hoped to accomplish, and the work that was completed. In doing so, they show how the CCC built Big Bend National Park, transforming the land and creating a park in the process.

¹⁹ Two national parks to note are Mammoth Cave and Olympic. These two parks are not included in these numbers because while both had CCC work and were established in 1941 and 1938, respectively, do not fall under the same circumstances as Big Bend and Everglades. Mammoth Cave was authorized in 1926, not during the New Deal. Olympic has its own unique history, but it was established as a national park in 1938 after a transfer from the Forest Service as a national monument (established as such in 1909), meaning that it was already under federal jurisdiction and protection. See *The National Parks: Index 1916-2016*.

The second part of this thesis focuses on the second objective of this study – Big Bend as an example of the CCC’s impact on its enrollees. The CCC was a national organization, run from Washington, DC with regional offices across the nation that oversaw the work being done in the camps. Big Bend National Park resided in Region III, the Southwest (depending on the date located in either Santa Fe or Oklahoma City). Regional officers oversaw plans, making sure they aligned with standards and overall development plans, conducted inspections of the camp and work progress, and were generally responsible for the administrative oversight of the camps. The regional offices, however, were not solely responsible for the operation of the CCC. It cannot be forgotten that the CCC was a national organization, and thus the national office played a role in how the CCC functioned at the camp level. The chapters in the second part work to show the involvement of the national office within the camps, showing the relationships present within the organization and, more broadly, the relationship between the federal government and CCC enrollees.

Chapter 4, “The Good it Will do the Enrollees,” examines education efforts in Big Bend. Education inherently became a necessary goal of the CCC in achieving its larger aims of providing enrollees with the skills they would need to gain future employment. This chapter examines Big Bend’s education efforts to determine the scope and effectiveness of the CCC’s education program. In understanding how the CCC approached making its enrollees better suited for employment through education, using Big Bend as a case study, it can then be seen how effective their efforts were. Chapter 5, “Safety Talks,” discusses accidents and their prevention at Big Bend. Additionally, this chapter delves into the physical transformation of the enrollees, showing the overarching changes that the CCC effected both in the land and in the enrollees. Through an analysis of the number and nature of accidents in Big Bend, as well as the camp

administration's response to them, the value that the CCC placed in its enrollees can be determined. If enrollees were regarded as disposable, accidents would not have been a pressing issue to the CCC or its personnel; instead, accidents and, more generally, safety were a focus at Big Bend. This chapter works to show how the CCC, at large, viewed its enrollees within the context of Big Bend.

Chapter 6, "Didn't Give a Damn," tells the experience of the enrollees with an abusive commanding officer, Walter Scoggins, in 1940. This chapter works to show the effort that the administration of the CCC put into determining the validity of claims against their personnel and the means they went to absolve such issues. Additionally, it shows the far-reaching implications of both the CCC and Big Bend, as Eleanor Roosevelt herself became involved in the investigation of Scoggins. Although not the typical experience, this chapter highlights the responsibility of the CCC and how they viewed their enrollees. If this experience was typical, then the CCC would not have removed Scoggins, and if the CCC did not accept the enrollees' claims as valid, then the organization would never have launched an extensive investigation. This chapter thus serves as a unique perspective into how the CCC cared for its enrollees and worked to ensure their welfare, even in extraordinary circumstances. Each of the chapters within Part Two work to uncover how the CCC functioned at the camp level, the goals of the CCC, the interactions between the national offices and the camps, and oversight of the federal government throughout the CCC.

Unfortunately, the CCC was unable to complete all the projects that they planned in Big Bend due to the outbreak of World War II. The conclusion of this study, chapter 7, focuses on the legacy of the CCC in Big Bend. In two ways, this can be seen: one, the projects that the CCC finished, and two, the projects that the CCC had planned for the future. The many CCC projects

remaining in the park not only are significant in number, and for the craftsmanship put into them, but they are also some of the focal points of the park today – showing their great significance. While the CCC was not able to complete or even start all of their proposed projects, the National Park Service continued with the CCC's original plans, eventually bringing many of them to fruition. These new projects, while not the work of the CCC, reflect the intention of it, demonstrating how the CCC helped to shape the park's future and its lasting legacy.

As a whole, this study seeks to fill a gap in the scholarship of Big Bend, Texas, and the New Deal. The principal development of Big Bend National Park by the CCC has been largely passed over for discussions of a possible international peace park with Mexico, and in the process, a foundational history of the park and the region has been forgotten. In presenting this history in two ways, as a case study of the park and the CCC, this study hopes to not only present a more complete history of Big Bend but to contribute to the larger histories of Texas and the CCC as well.

CHAPTER 2

PLANNING A PARK

Texas, in retaining its public lands when it entered the Union, entered the New Deal with an under-developed state park system. Prior to 1927, Texas state parks were centered around small road-side beauty spots – much to the displeasure of boosters of large parks. In 1927, however, after Texas accepted a donation of twenty-three parks from local groups across the state, it had the start of a state park system. Considering the size of Texas, almost 172 million acres, a mere 2,056 acres of parks from the recent donation left plenty of room for development. Moreover, it did little to meet the National Conference on State Parks' slogan: a 500-acre "state park every hundred miles," nor did it seem to fulfill the desires of the Texas State Parks Board (TSPB) who wanted small fifty-acre beauty-filled waysides for traveling motorists. The situation for parks in Texas seemed bleak, especially with the onset of the Great Depression.¹

David E. Colp, chairman of the TSPB, remained undeterred and saw the New Deal as an opportunity for the development of Texas state parks. Federal funds could be used to employ men and at the same time build in and improve parks across the state.² To many, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) seemed to be a prime opportunity to help draw Texas out of the Great Depression and to build its small under-developed park system. Some turned to already established local parks to draw in funds, but some looked further. Texas politicians saw Big Bend as an untapped resource – in terms of scenic and economic value – and sought to set it aside as a park. Big Bend would not only provide employment in the short-term, through the CCC, but it would draw tourists and their money throughout its duration.

¹ James Wright Steely, *Parks for Texas: Enduring Landscapes of the New Deal* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), 6-7, 231-233.

² Steely, *Parks for Texas*, 9-11.

This chapter works to detail the history of Big Bend National Park through the plans for park development. In understanding what the park promoters – state and national legislators, National Park Service (NPS) employees, CCC officials, and the general Texas public – saw in Big Bend, it can be better understood why specific plans were made. These plans directly influenced the projects that the CCC completed during its tenure in the park. With little development in Big Bend at the time, these projects were fundamental in the creation, establishment, and nature of the park. Thus, the plans laid forth in the early period of the park shaped its initial development and laid a foundation for the future of Big Bend.

The planning described in this chapter also shows what aspects of Big Bend National Park's development were unique and which aligned with the larger goals of the NPS. The NPS put forth ideas and standards for all national park development which the CCC followed. In this, the character of design and construction Big Bend National Park was built by the CCC to fit within the larger system. At the same time, Big Bend had its own unique landscape with which the CCC had to account for in their designs and plans. The CCC had to understand what aspects of the landscape would inhibit and promote development – where could projects be built, how should they be built, and what local materials could be used. In considering this, Big Bend National Park certainly had its own unique development and character, as it was designed and developed with these aspects in mind.

Considering the establishment of the CCC in early April 1933, the swift creation of Texas Canyons State Park (later re-named Big Bend) on May 27, 1933 seems to have a direct correlation. Though not explicitly stated in the legislation, this link is confirmed when Big Bend received its first CCC camp in the spring of 1934, less than a year later. The establishment of Big Bend as a state park was of such an important nature that the Texas legislature deemed the matter

“an emergency and an imperative public necessity.”³ In October, Texas Canyons State Park was officially re-named Big Bend State Park, with the Texas legislature once more claiming that “the development of parks in the State of Texas is very important.”⁴ In both May and October 1933, the Texas legislature suspended the rule requiring the bills to be read on “three several days in each House.”⁵ This was done in an effort to expedite the process and to avoid the possible loss of land in Big Bend to private parties.

In May 1933, the bill creating Texas Canyons State Park overwhelmingly passed with one-hundred and thirty-five votes in favor and only eight votes against it.⁶ When the Texas Legislature voted to re-name the park Big Bend State Park and expand its boundaries in October 1933, the measure unanimously passed.⁷ While West Texans spearheaded park efforts, the overwhelming approval for development in Big Bend shows the potential that Texans felt there was in the area – especially as a park.

Legislation creating Big Bend State Park focused on the scenic beauties contained there and the imperative need to set the land aside for a park. Scenic beauties alone, however, cannot warrant such a need. In creating Big Bend State Park, Texas took away lands from the public school fund, for a considerably small amount of money. While legislators argued, correctly, that the land held no value in terms of resources, in the middle of the Great Depression, it seems strange to take land away from the fund for the mere purpose of protecting scenic wonders. It then must be considered the value that a park would bring to the state. Big Bend could bring

³ Hans Peter Mareus Neilsen Gammel, *The Laws of Texas, Volume 28: 1931-1933* (Austin: Gammel’s Book Store, 1933), 126-27.

⁴ Gammel, *The Laws of Texas, Vol. 28*, 278.

⁵ Gammel, *The Laws of Texas, Vol. 28*, 126-127, 278.

⁶ Gammel, *The Laws of Texas, Vol. 28*, 126-127.

⁷ Gammel, *The Laws of Texas, Vol. 28*, 278

federal funds into the state through the CCC and development would lead to tourism – both of which would help to stimulate the economy. As a state park, Big Bend could do both of these things, yet to some, this was not enough.⁸

Some Texas politicians, including Everett Ewing Townsend and Robert Ewing Thomason, saw Big Bend as an area worthy of further protection and a national park designation. For Townsend, Big Bend became his paradise as he served as sheriff of Brewster County; as a politician, it became his personal cause. When Robert Wagstaff, a Texas State Representative from Abilene, approached Townsend about the scenic beauties in Big Bend and a possible state park in 1933 he quickly became involved. Townsend, who lamented the fact that Texans did not know about the existence of Big Bend, pushed for protection as a state park and further as a national park. Due to his efforts, Townsend has been given the moniker, “The Father of Big Bend.”⁹

More than his efforts alone, Townsend recruited others to his cause. Townsend, in his position as a Texas State Representative, was able to push legislation to designate Big Bend as a state park, but he needed help for national levels of protection. Townsend, to gain supporters at the national level, turned to Thomason, the Texas Representative in Congress for West Texas. Townsend threatened Thomason with all he could, “[Thomason’s] constituency or a six-shooter,” whatever it would take to get Big Bend the support it needed.¹⁰ While Thomason believed that he had “no time to waste visiting that God-forsaken Big Bend Country,” he quickly

⁸ Ron C. Tyler, *The Big Bend: A History of the Last Texas Frontier* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2010), 190-193.

⁹ Tyler, *The Big Bend*, 189-193.

¹⁰ Tyler, *The Big Bend*, 193.

was convinced otherwise after a visit to Townsend's "old park."¹¹ Both Townsend and Thomason were adamant supporters of the Big Bend park project and were instrumental in it receiving national park status.

Men like Townsend and Thomason felt Big Bend was worthy of more than just state park status. They felt that the scenic beauties, resources, and environments contained there were important, unique, and valuable enough to warrant its inclusion in the national park system. More than just a series of national parks, the national park system includes areas designated as national monuments, preserves, reserves, lakeshores, seashores, rivers, and more. Texans pushed for Big Bend's designation as a national park, meaning that they felt it "[contained] a variety of resources and [encompassed] large land or water areas to help provide adequate protection of the resources." In comparison, a national monument "is intended to preserve at least one nationally significant resource," and "is usually smaller than a national park and lacks its diversity of attractions."¹²

In pushing for more than state park status, specifically national park status, Big Bend supporters like Townsend and Thomason saw the value in setting the land aside and how the area deserved such a designation. Big Bend, as such a unique ecosystem – containing deserts, mountains, canyons, and a river – clearly met the expectations of a national park. Moreover, the flora and fauna contained within Big Bend made it worthy if not necessary for protection and preservation. The first steps came with Texas designating the area as Big Bend State Park that allowed for the area to begin bringing in funds and resources through the CCC and possible

¹¹ Clifford B. Casey and Lewis H. Saxton, *The Life of Everett Ewing Townsend* (Alpine: West Texas Historical and Scientific Society, 1958), 59.

¹² *The National Parks: Index 1916-2016* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service), 9.

tourism. It was, however, understood that Big Bend contained such land, resources, and beauties that it could be more. Because of this, supporters pushed for Big Bend as a national park, not only would it then be protected and preserved for generations to come, but it would bring with it more economic resources.

In 1935, legislation was first introduced in Washington D.C. to establish Big Bend National Park. Texans introduced the measures in Congress – Representative Thomason in the House and Senators Tom Connally and Morris Sheppard in the Senate. The measures passed on June 20, 1935, and Big Bend National Park was formally created – validating the beliefs of Townsend and others who felt Big Bend deserved such a designation. Because a substantial legal obstacle remained for the Texas park in that there were no federal lands in Big Bend – it remained more a patchwork quilt of land ownership – the park could not be established. The Big Bend National Park bill required that Texas obtain all the titles to the lands “as necessary for recreation park purposes,” and then the park would be officially opened. While the park was not established yet, as lands had to be obtained and turned over to the federal government, a national park in Big Bend was authorized. Big Bend National Park may not have been formally opened, but it was a reality on paper, designating the land and its resources for future protection and development.¹³

During this time, the CCC camp, first brought into Big Bend in 1934, remained in the park until 1937 – henceforth referred to as the first iteration of camps. As Texas worked to obtain more land for the proposed park, gathering funds and the necessary titles, the CCC completed various projects. In the first iteration of the camps, the CCC built the road into the Basin, a well,

¹³ Steely, *Parks for Texas*, 87; *Conservation, U.S. Code*, Title 16, §156 (1935).

six miles of trails, and other projects, however, they soon ran out of work to do.¹⁴ With land ownership still an issue and the opening date of the park an ambiguity, CCC developments stalled – where could they build and what should they build? The uncertainty existing around Big Bend eventually caused the CCC to move out of the area in 1937 to work on other projects throughout the state. This, however, would not be the end of the CCC in Big Bend.¹⁵

As Texas began obtaining more and more land for the park in Big Bend, the official opening of Big Bend National Park seemed to be a more viable reality than before. With prospects of the national park opening, the CCC returned to Big Bend – this will now be referred to as the second iteration of parks. The CCC re-occupied their former camp in January 1940 and remained in Big Bend until March 1942, with the CCC officially shutting down. It was during this time that the CCC worked towards developing Big Bend as a national park, completing projects that would be needed in a national park as well as one that matched national park standards.¹⁶

Texas did not receive title to all the lands in Big Bend until June 1944, but by then the CCC had completed several projects, building the infrastructure for Big Bend as a national park. On June 6, 1944, Amon G. Carter, the president of the Big Bend Park Association, presented President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes with the title to Big Bend National Park. Many know this date as that of the Normandy invasion in World War II, a significant day in world history, yet Texans had another reason to mark the momentous date – the creation of Big Bend National Park, which would officially open on July 1, 1944.¹⁷ The work

¹⁴ CCC Work Accomplished Under the Supervision of the National Park Service, May 21, 1934 to December 15, 1937, Development Outline, Records of Region III (Southwest Region), National Archives, Denver, CO.

¹⁵ For dates and locations of CCC camps throughout Texas, see Steely, *Parks for Texas*.

¹⁶ For dates and locations of CCC camps throughout Texas, see Steely, *Parks for Texas*.

¹⁷ Steely, *Parks for Texas*, 184.

that the CCC did and the plans they made were no doubt crucial to this process.

In order to open Big Bend National Park, in theory, all Texas had to do was turn over lands to the federal government – a process in which the CCC was not involved. However, without the CCC, the park would not have been able to open to the public immediately following the cession of lands to the federal government. The CCC, during its time in Big Bend, effectively built the park and its infrastructure – the road leading into the Basin, various trails, lodging accommodations, water systems, and other crucial projects. Moreover, the CCC made plans for the park and its development; while not all were completed during the CCC's time in Big Bend, they did set a precedent for future development. Thus, while not necessary for the transfer of lands and establishment of Big Bend National Park, the CCC's efforts were vital to the creation of the park itself.

When the prospects for a CCC camp in Big Bend first arose from the Texas State Parks Board, the CCC began sending inspectors out to the park to determine the work that could be done. Herbert Maier, a NPS administrator whose architectural designs were used at many sites, wrote to Conrad Wirth, the assistant director of the NPS, stating that the CCC would complete “20 miles of truck trails, 72 miles of fencing, Horse and foot trails, Over-night cabins, concession building, [and a] telephone line.” Maier added that any work the CCC completed in Big Bend would serve to help “tremendously in acquiring the rest of the land for the area.” He then wrote about Roger Toll's recent trip to the Big Bend area. Toll's vision for the park included roads that would “run up the walls of the Rio Grande Canyon onto the plateau above, and thence across this plateau partly over existing roads up to and through the Chisos

Mountains.”¹⁸ The thought was that the roads would lead to the three canyons in Big Bend along the Rio Grande – Santa Helene (Elena), Mariscal, and Boquillas.¹⁹ Maier did note that Green Gulch “will always be the natural entrance way to the park from the west,” and this would be where the principal work of the CCC would be done. Thus, beginning in early 1934, Big Bend was receiving considerable attention and forethought from the NPS. While perhaps not yet as a national park, the NPS still put notable thought into the planning of Big Bend. They considered the natural character of the landscape and how the park could exist as a whole – extending beyond just the Basin area of the park. Though a water source large enough to support a camp would not be found in the Basin until April and it would take until May 25, 1934 for a company to move into Big Bend, plans for the development of the park had already begun in earnest.²⁰

As the camp at Big Bend began in earnest, the TSPB applied for another CCC company to join the camp at Big Bend under the new drought relief program. In these applications (originally in July 1934 and a revised copy in September), the TSPB pushed for lookout houses, roads, trails, cabins, a lodge, fencing, and other various projects. Originally, the TSPB planned to construct lookout houses on Pulliam Bluff, Crown Mountain, Casa Grande, and Emory Peak, though it reduced this to just one undisclosed location by September. Roads were planned to “open up the mountainous areas and make accessible ... the Boot Springs Canyon area and South Rim mesa of the Chisos Range,” as were “ten miles of horse trails.” One of the primary

¹⁸ Roger Toll was instrumental in the creation of Big Bend National Park, as well as many other national parks. Unfortunately, Toll died in a car crash on February 25, 1936 along with George Wright. Both men have mountains named in their honor in Big Bend.

¹⁹ Santa Elena is the present-day name for the westernmost canyon in Big Bend. During the New Deal era, it was typically written as Santa Helena or Santa Helene. The source used for this information wrote it as “Santa Helene,” hence the distinction here.

²⁰ Quotes and information from the letter come from: Letter to Conrad Wirth from Herbert Maier, February 18, 1934, 601-03.1 (CCC) Applications for Camps, Records of Region III (Southwest Region), National Archives, Denver, CO. Information on the CCC camp in Big Bend comes from Steely, *Parks for Texas*, 71.

focuses of the plans, however, was the “Hacienda de los Chisos” that “should be constructed with a view of taking care of the many thousands of annual visitors to this park.” The original TSPB application touted that Big Bend would “prove the most popular recreational area, not only in the State of Texas, but in the entire Southwest,” thus necessitating such housing facilities. Perhaps these claims were exaggerated, yet nonetheless these projects became some of the focal points of the CCC at Big Bend.

The CCC approached park projects and overall park design with ideas of NPS standards and landscape architecture in mind. Landscape architecture is best described as theories of park design. Though this may appear as counterintuitive, especially in the case of national parks, how can and does one design natural and scenic beauties? Landscape architecture works to enhance or make available such scenic attractions to the public. All aspects of a park, including lodging, roads, trails, scenic overlooks, picnic areas, and campgrounds, are designed with concepts of landscape architecture in mind. Though principles of landscape architecture have evolved over the years, during the CCC period, the NPS held to a certain standard of these practices.²¹ This meant that when planning the parks, the CCC considered the character of the area to determine what to build, where to locate roads and trails, and how to build them.

Through its creation of a “national standard for park infrastructure,” the NPS “helped ensure a widespread reverence for the natural landscape,” which was defined and rooted in principles of landscape architecture.²² At the same time, “the tourism industry developed, railroads yielded to automobiles, road building opened remote corners of the land,” thus making

²¹ For more information see Ethan Carr, *Wilderness by Design: Landscape Architecture and the National Park Service* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998).

²² Bonnie Stepenoff, “Wild Lands and Wonders: Preserving Nature and Culture in National Parks,” in *Cultural Landscapes: Balancing Nature and Heritage in Preservation Practice*, ed. Richard Longstreth (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 98.

parks more accessible to visitors. In the process, many scenic attractions contained in them “lost their integrity.”²³ The CCC and those who worked to create the parks as places to both preserve and enjoy these scenic places, as a result, had to struggle with this unique problem – finding a balance between allowing access to and recreation in the parks and their scenic wonders while at the same time protecting these environments and landscapes.

The NPS approached this issue by calling for harmonization between park development and the surrounding landscapes.²⁴ In doing so, “Roads, fire roads, and trails would be kept to a minimum, but would allow access to the most important scenic and other features of interest in the park.”²⁵ The goal, then, of the CCC aligned with that of the NPS from the beginning, to ensure the “the preservation of scenic values and natural features.”²⁶ To best achieve these goals, the NPS produced and distributed a handbook for park design in 1934. Significantly, the federal handbook was written by Herbert Maier, then serving as the region officer for Region III, the Southwest, which included Big Bend National Park.

Maier, and his ideas, became instrumental, if not inspirational, in the development of parks throughout the nation during the New Deal. Maier personally worked to “determine the character and quality of state park architecture in the Southwest,” but he was “emulated” by park architects outside of Region III.²⁷ Specifically, the handbook he wrote became the textbook for park design during the period. It “presented the practices and principles of good park design”

²³ Stepenoff, “Wild Lands and Wonders,” 92.

²⁴ Lynn M. Jones, “The Design of National Park Visitor Centers: The Relationships between Buildings and their Sites” (Master’s thesis, University of Georgia, 1990), 31.

²⁵ Carr, *Wilderness by Design*, 269.

²⁶ Linda Flint McClelland, *Building the National Parks: Historic Landscape Design and Construction* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 339.

²⁷ Carr, *Wilderness by Design*, 277.

through the use of photographs of projects that Maier had designed himself.²⁸ In doing so, Maier “stressed basic principles of design, which he then translated into specific practices that enabled structures to blend inconspicuously into their natural surroundings.”²⁹ To best accomplish this, Maier emphasized “the use of indigenous materials, use of freehand lines, horizontal emphasis, commonality scale among all members and the whole structure, elimination of right angles and rigid lines, and architectural blending.”³⁰ The ideas presented by Maier, and adopted by both the CCC and the NPS, were present in Big Bend’s development. It is significant to note that not only were the ideas used by the CCC due to NPS standards and thus present in Big Bend National Park, they were overseen and implemented by Maier himself. Thus, the man who developed the principles played a central role in the planning and implementation of designs in Big Bend.

Ideas of landscape architecture and national park standards were central to the original planning of Big Bend, and throughout the CCC’s time in the park. In one sense, the CCC and NPS worked to blend their construction projects with the natural landscapes – a central tenant of landscape architecture. At the same time, however, in building roads and trails to access the natural landscapes and vistas the CCC was creating a landscape all its own. The CCC determined which views were ideal or worthy, and built roads and trails to and in accordance with them. Moreover, in an effort to blend their projects into the environment, the CCC constructed their own scenery and, importantly, perspective of the landscape. It must be remembered that the CCC while it did not place the vistas nor shape them, it did, in a sense, construct them within the park. The CCC determined which areas were worthy of development, based on ideas of scenic beauty, accessibility, and practicability for construction purposes. In these decisions, it was in many

²⁸ McClelland, *Building the National Parks*, 406.

²⁹ McClelland, *Building the National Parks*, 407.

³⁰ McClelland, *Building the National Parks*, 407.

cases subjective, yet they have effectively marked, transformed, and affected the landscape of Big Bend. In viewing the scenery and landscape of Big Bend National Park, while it is a natural experience and in a natural environment, the experience was constructed, designed, and planned by the CCC and NPS with ideas of landscape architecture in mind.

In accordance with Maier's ideas, when the TSPB proposed a camp at Big Bend, they carefully noted what materials would be used in the construction of projects. They stated that "good building stone is unlimited in this area," a necessary piece of information considering that all the structures had been "planned to be built of native rock and timber."³¹ This not only aligned with the NPS standards set forth by Maier but took into account the considerable distance that building materials would have to travel to make it into the park. It could also be seen that the CCC put considerable thought into the planning of Big Bend. Maier wrote to W.C. Carnes, a chief engineer for the NPS, that "there is too much at stake in working in an area that may later become a National Park, especially one that is virgin to begin with."³² Maier thus highlighted both his involvement in Big Bend and the investment of the CCC in ideas of landscape architecture.

By 1935, the TSPB had expanded its ideas about what Big Bend should look like as a national park. They felt that "the principal project for this park should be the construction of approximately forty miles of truck trails around the outside slopes of the Chisos Mountains, making the park accessible from every side." They also proposed "some twenty miles of horse trails" to "to enable visitors to visit all of the points of scenic, historical and scientific interest."

³¹ Form 3-2, Application for Big Bend DSP 1-T (Revised), September 15, 1934, 601-03.1 (CCC) Applications for Camps.

³² Letter to W.C. Carnes from Herbert Maier, August 24, 1934, DSP-1, Records of Region III (Southwest Region), National Archives, Denver, CO.

Considering the number of visitors the TSPB anticipated that Big Bend would draw, they declared that the construction of “thirty or forty overnight cabins” would be a necessity.³³

The plans the TSPB laid out for Big Bend were certainly ambitious, and the CCC administration supported them, considering their approval of the camps in the park as well as the projects themselves. It was, however, the usual approach of the CCC to be conservative in their actions. George Nason, an inspector for the CCC, wrote to Maier that he was “very anxious to be sure that we did not suddenly go into the Chisos Mountains and build some roads that could not be thoroughly justified.” He qualified these feelings by stating, “it is one thing to build a road and another thing to take it out.” Nason did recommend the extension of the camp road through the pass in Green Gulch, as “any road [they] build must go through this pass” and it would “set up a considerable amount of work to be done.” So, it can then be seen that the CCC, while supportive of the TSPB’s plans, did carefully consider them in order to make sure that CCC labor was being used effectively. This is especially pertinent in the case of Big Bend as land ownership was a concern, as was the eventual consideration of the area as a national park – thus having to meet such expectations and standards.³⁴

After Big Bend’s formal authorization as a national park, plans to elevate the park itself to national park standards began in earnest. Rather than a possibility, Big Bend now was going to exist as a national park, and the CCC designed projects accordingly. The CCC had to consider standards for a national park, rather than those of just a state park, and how to best shape the character of the landscape to fit Big Bend into the existing national park system. Carnes wrote that “from a scenic standpoint it appeared that a road from Alpine, rather than Marathon, would

³³ Camp Application – Big Bend State Park, January 23, 1935, 601-03.1 (CCC) Applications for Camps.

³⁴ Letter to Herbert Maier from George Nason, January 30, 1935, DSP-1.

be preferable as it would give the most spectacular view of the mountain ranges while approaching the National Park.” This was one of the first references of Big Bend as a national park within CCC documents. Thus, Big Bend National Park began to exist in the minds of the CCC, and they considered this fact in all approaches to park development.³⁵

Carnes, in his report, thought about more than just the present needs of the park, which included bringing the infrastructure up to national park standards and providing the necessary accommodations for tourists. He looked beyond the immediate needs and towards the ultimate objective for the park. Carnes stated that the “fullest use of the park in the future may force the construction of a road along the Rio Grande River between the Santa Helena Canyon on the west and Boquillas on the east.” He did admit that, “at the present time ... there seem to be no points of interest between these two terminals to warrant the construction of [such] a road.” This road, however, was only one of many projects that Carnes considered for the park.³⁶

Carnes identified five different facilities that would be necessary for “for park administration and for taking care of visitors.” These were a lodge, housekeeping cabins, a public campground, a government area (including residences and utilities), and a check station. It was his belief, and thus feasibly that of the CCC and NPS, that the site of the lodge would then become the natural hub of the park itself. As such, when two locations were contemplated for lodge development – Laguna Meadow and the Basin itself – this became a considerable factor to take into account. Carnes noted that Laguna Meadow was “a beautiful mountain meadow with large shade trees in abundance.” Yet, it was passed over for the Basin location for several reasons: one, it would be difficult to build a road to reach it and two, they desired to preserve the

³⁵ Report of Proposed Big Bend National Park by W.C. Carnes, August 16, 1935, Big Bend – General Misc., Records of Region III (Southwest Region), National Archives, Denver, CO.

³⁶ Report of Proposed Big Bend National Park by W.C. Carnes, August 16, 1935, Big Bend – General Misc.

area as an undeveloped tract of land. This was not only a reasonable justification in light of the potential construction costs and labor considerations but also within the goals of the NPS in landscape architecture. Instead, Carnes saw the Basin as the ideal location for lodge development – it was level, easy to access, and large enough for all contemplated park structures. More so, “it overlooks the canyon which terminates well above the surrounding plateau and which is known locally as ‘The Window’” and “would permit using all of the road which has been constructed by the C.C.C. camp into the Green Gulch area.” Again, this highlights the same key considerations that Carnes took into account when he was evaluating the Laguna Meadows location – effective use of the CCC and the standards seen within the NPS.³⁷

Carnes additionally planned other accommodations to be built in the future. He felt that “a stone or adobe ranch style of development” would be needed near Santa Helena Canyon, “similar to the Phantom Ranch at Grand Canyon National Park.” This proposed lodging would fit into the character of the surrounding area, aligning with NPS ideas of architecture, and follow the model of some of the other national parks in Maier’s vast jurisdiction. For the area around Boquillas, Carnes envisioned the preservation of “the existing Mexican ranches... as they are bonafide [*sic*] examples of [the] same, having been built before there was any thought of their being used as tourist attractions.” Again, Carnes took the local landscapes into consideration for future park development and worked to highlight it in the design of future projects.³⁸

Blending projects into the landscape was a central feature of CCC plans in Big Bend and a marker of NPS ideas in landscape architecture. This is highlighted in the project requests for guard rails along the Green Gulch road. The CCC proposed “the use of large irregular stones of

³⁷ Report of Proposed Big Bend National Park by W.C. Carnes, August 16, 1935, Big Bend – General Misc.

³⁸ Report of Proposed Big Bend National Park by W.C. Carnes, August 16, 1935, Big Bend – General Misc.

natural weathered color and placed in a manner to blend with the color and ruggedness of the mountains.” Though the construction of guard rails in this manner would require the use of additional equipment, the CCC at Big Bend felt it was necessary considering the nature of the project and the location of it.³⁹

The scenic value and interest of certain areas additionally played into the consideration of projects and the development of them. J. T. Roberts, a CCC inspector, wrote to George Nason about proposed developments along the South Rim and described the area as “definitely and wonderfully magnificent.” So, when the CCC proposed building a trail-side museum at the South Rim, Roberts disagreed. He said, “an attempt to look at minor museum pieces when one of the finest views in America is in front of you is somewhat like going to the Alps to play bridge.”⁴⁰ In the end, plans for a museum at the South Rim were dropped, although development in the area remained a significant topic of conversation.

Nason also commented to Maier that the South Rim “has one of the finest views in America.” It was because of this that he felt the establishment of an overnight unit on the South Rim was an eventuality rather than just a mere possibility. He argued that a trip to the South Rim, “like others in some of our national parks, will not be at its finest if it is limited to one day.” According to Nason, in order to best take advantage of the sweeping views and scenery, an “overnight lodge, with an enclosed veranda on the very edge of the Rim, from which the tourist may view the splash of color at sundown and again the mystery of sunrise, is something that is bound to come, sooner or later, at this point.” There was little discussion of the character of such

³⁹ Project Estimate and Allotment Request, Guard Rails, July 28, 1935, General Part IV, Records of Region III (Southwest Region), National Archives, Denver, CO.

⁴⁰ Letter to J.T. Roberts from George Nason, Subject: Big Bend General Plan, September 26, 1935, BBC, Records of Region III (Southwest Region), National Archives, Denver, CO.

a lodging facility, but the idea of it and why it should exist – to take full advantage of the scenic offerings of Big Bend – were undoubtedly present in the discussion of the park’s development.⁴¹

The preservation of Big Bend as a national park and the development of it through the efforts of the CCC had the support of both Texas politicians and the Texas public throughout the process. Within the legislation setting the lands aside for park purposes, the backing of Texas politicians can be seen, as can be assumed the support of their constituents – if the politician’s actions in supporting Big Bend were not those held by their constituents, it is unlikely that they would have voted in such a manner, especially for a park to which few of them had ties. In addition, Texas newspapers touted the natural beauty that would be preserved in the park and the economic benefits that would be brought with its development. These discussions highlight some of the trends already seen in the development plans set forth by the CCC, but also work to show what the public envisioned for Big Bend and how these ideas aligned with those of the CCC.

As a national park, Big Bend was set aside for the preservation of its landscape, revered for its scenic beauty. Areas of particular interest, for example, the Window or the South Rim, then became areas to protect but also to allow access to so that visitors could experience such landscapes. In doing this, the TSPB, NPS, and all those involved would promote the development in Big Bend and, in turn, the creation and continuation of work projects in the park. These projects would bring with them economic benefits in two ways: one, employment opportunities (in the initial timeframe of development through the CCC) and two, tourism. The great economic benefits that were touted to come with the development of Big Bend can be seen to have played a significant role in the planning of the park as well as the execution of park projects.

⁴¹ Letter to George Nason from Herbert Maier, Subject: Big Bend General Plan, October 14, 1935, BBC.

The CCC took into account the various scenic beauties contained in Big Bend when planning its development. This can be seen in the discussions of development along the South Rim as well as the proposed lodge sites in the Basin. Ideas of scenic beauty, however, were not limited to the CCC or NPS. Texas newspapers described the area as “one of the most beautiful scenic sections in the country,” “the remaining great wilderness in Texas,” and repeatedly as the “last frontier” of Texas.⁴² Other newspapers spent considerable time focusing on the feelings evoked by such a ‘virgin’ landscape. One said that “The vast empty solitude of the Big Bend ... does something to men – it rides their souls with a torturing loneliness, or it stirs an affection in their hearts til it hurts and holds them like a woman’s hands.”⁴³ Another wrote that the landscape contained “such scenes of grandeur as may not be readily duplicated anywhere in our country” and that “one can lose himself in contemplation of one of nature’s masterpieces.”⁴⁴ While these could perhaps be seen as exaggerations, they did align with ideas set forth by the CCC and NPS.

The NPS described Big Bend as having “colorful rock expanses,” “outstanding views in three directions,” and at the South Rim the “most dramatic panorama in the Chisos.” It hoped to maintain the “remarkable virgin character of the scenery” by limiting facility construction in the park, while still providing roads and trails that “would lead to various points of interest in the mountain areas” and “out again into the surrounding more desert-like areas” and the other points

⁴² Charles E. Simmons, “Texas Parks Get Break in Funds,” *Laredo Times*, October 22, 1933 (Quote 1); “Big Bend Will Be Texas First National Park When Established,” *McKinney Daily Courier Gazette*, July 5, 1935 (Quote 2); See “Big Bend Park Bill is Signed by President,” *Alpine Avalanche*, June 28, 1935; Harper Sparks, “Setting of Proposed Big Bend National Park Is Million-Acre Wonderland of Scenic Beauty,” *El Paso Herald Post*, July 2, 1935; and “Texas to Get Her First National Park With One to be Built in Big Bend,” *Denison Press*, July 9, 1935 for references of “last frontier”;

⁴³ Barry Scobee, “Sun, Solitude and Scenery Prevail Every Day in the Big Bend Country of Texas Where the Nation’s Most Unique National Park is Being Developed,” *Alpine Avalanche*, December 27, 1935.

⁴⁴ Victor Schoffelmayer, “Trails Lead to Big Bend Beauty Spots,” *Dallas Morning News*, July 10, 1944.

of interest throughout the park.⁴⁵ One report discussed how trails could lead to “vantage points [that] are equal to those found in the better national park areas.” It recommended a series of trails within the Basin, leading to the various points of interest, with a road system leading into the Basin and encircling it, eventually leading down to and along the Rio Grande.⁴⁶ This then would both take advantage of the scenery, allowing visitors to enjoy and experience it, while still leaving the landscape untouched by automobiles by having areas within the Basin accessible by foot alone. The landscape in Big Bend was enough to warrant a state and then national park, however, the CCC and NPS had to contend with preserving the landscape while bringing visitors to the park to experience it. As can be seen, this involved the careful planning of the park and its developments – areas of particular interest would be accessible but only to those on foot, yet accommodations would be provided within the Basin to house the hoards of tourists they expected to visit.

Tourism soon became a significant point of discussion when the Texas newspapers wrote about Big Bend. David E. Colp, the Chairman of the TSPB, argued that out-of-state visitors to Big Bend would “burn 500 miles of Texas gasoline.”⁴⁷ Another article discussed the “thousands of tourists” that would “stay a night in Del Rio and continue to San Antonio to see the historic Alamo” due to their visit in Big Bend.⁴⁸ These potential tourists warranted the construction of accommodations within the park, about which newspapers boasted. One newspaper discussed plans for a “major center ... up in the green and cool Chisos mountains, with western range motif and carrying particular appeal to summer vacationists” and “a typical Mexican style resort ...

⁴⁵ General Description of the Big Bend Region, BIBE General Misc.

⁴⁶ Description of Possible Development, Big Bend – General Misc.

⁴⁷ “Importance of Park is Stressed,” *Alpine Avalanche*, September 20, 1935.

⁴⁸ “Del Rioans are Invited to See Big Bend Park,” *Del Rio Evening News*, June 22, 1935.

near that awe-inspiring canyons on the Rio Grande where winter seldom invades.”⁴⁹ Another posited that following the conclusion of World War II, tourists “who brought \$300,000,000 into Texas, in 1939, likely will bring much more” in their trips to Big Bend and the rest of the state.⁵⁰ Due to these estimates, park promoters pushed for the development of Big Bend and the work of the CCC.

Some newspapers touted the work the CCC had completed already. In discussing the Green Gulch road leading into the park, one article declared that it “reveals by its wayside vegetation that takes the eye and fills the memory afterward.”⁵¹ Another article noted that the work that had been completed had “been accomplished without spoiling the wild beauty of the place,” even when blazing new trails into “places before inaccessible to any but the hardest explorer.”⁵² It can be seen then that while providing employment, the CCC additionally worked to provide the development that Big Bend needed, which in turn would bring tourists.

Maier wrote to Carnes in March 1936 about the progress of the work at the Big Bend park. He noted that “the West Texas Chamber of Commerce is exceedingly anxious to have some form of overnight accommodations provided for the visiting public.” Maier explained that they would “publicize the project and bring as many people as possible from the more populated areas of Texas to the Big Bend in order to sell the citizens of Texas the land acquisition program.”⁵³ This clearly aligned with CCC and NPS ideas for the park, as this was a focal point

⁴⁹ “Rugged Big Bend Area to Become International, All-Weather Park,” *Big Spring Daily Herald*, June 5, 1944.

⁵⁰ “Postwar Texas Roads,” *Dallas Morning News*, July 14, 1944.

⁵¹ Barry Scobee, “Sun, Solitude and Scenery Prevail Every Day in the Big Bend Country of Texas,” *Alpine Avalanche*, December 27, 1935.

⁵² “Think,” *San Antonio Express*, July 19, 1935.

⁵³ Letter to W.C. Carnes from Herbert Maier, Subject: Participation in Big Bend ECW Work, March 9, 1936, BBC 2, Records of Region III (Southwest Region), National Archives, Denver, CO.

of their own plans, and shows how the public was responding to park developments. To the West Texas Chamber of Commerce, Big Bend was a source of economic prospects, and it was in their best interest to see it developed. This trend is additionally shown when the Chamber of Commerce of Alpine, Texas decided to fund the salary of A. F. Robinson. Robinson was going to leave the CCC for a short period to procure options on the lands within the proposed national park for the state to buy. The Alpine Chamber of Commerce felt this was a necessary task, and put forth the funds needed, showing their support for the park.⁵⁴ Both the West Texas and Alpine Chambers of Commerce saw value in Big Bend, enough for them to become directly involved with the CCC – either by asking for certain developments or providing necessary funds. To them, the developments in Big Bend would draw visitors to the area and provide economic incentives for themselves.

While tourism existed as a focal point of park promotion efforts, Big Bend as an untapped resource with little to no development required both an influx of money and resources as well as intensive labor and construction efforts. For Texas, this was the advantage of the New Deal and the CCC specifically. The federal government, in an effort to help alleviate the pressures of the Great Depression, invested in state and national park projects, creating infrastructure projects and employing men in the process. In the case of Big Bend, this meant not only providing lodging accommodations for the tourists, but building roads, trails, and other necessary projects.

As Big Bend National Park entered its second phase of development, with the second CCC camp re-occupying the area in January 1940, the CCC planned to resume and build upon the original plans it had set forth rather than starting anew. Considering the imminent prospects

⁵⁴ Letter to Herbert Maier from George Nason, October 4, 1935, BBC 2.

of Big Bend coming under official jurisdiction, the CCC had created plans at the beginning that would provide for a transition into a national park. Thus, the CCC and the NPS viewed Big Bend as a national park from the outset and planned accordingly. In doing this, the CCC was later able to merely continue with its original plans, developing Big Bend towards the ultimate goal of a national park to rival others within the system.

Big Bend had been compared with other parks in the national park system by Texas newspapers throughout its development. Texas newsman considered the beauty contained in Big Bend to be comparable to, if not greater than, that seen in other more famous national parks. One article stated that “Big Bend offered scenery that rivals the Yellowstone and Yosemite parks for beauty,” and that “other sections ... offer scenic beauties and desert wonders that equal the Painted Desert of Arizona and the Grand Canyon of Colorado in splendor.”⁵⁵ Another even referenced the work being done by the CCC and the NPS, claiming “if the original plans drafted by the National Park Service are carried out the Big Bend National Park will be able to vie with Grand Canyon, Yellowstone and the others in point of buildings and equipment.” It noted, however, that the “National Park Service stoutly strives to preserve” Big Bend’s unique and defining character.⁵⁶

Considering this, the amount of time and effort the CCC and NPS put into planning Big Bend National Park is understandable. In February 1940, Conrad Wirth sent a memorandum to the regional director that said, “in view of the fact that the Big Bend area is a proposed future National Park, the authority of the Inspector for plan and job application is hereby withdrawn.” Instead, he wrote, “CCC jobs may be approved only by the Regional Director or his authorized

⁵⁵ Harper Sparks, “Setting of Proposed Big Bend National Park is Million-Acre Wonderland of Scenic Beauty,” *El Paso Herald Post*, July 2, 1935.

⁵⁶ Victor Schoffelmayer, “Small Staff Begins Work at New Park,” *Dallas Morning News*, July 9, 1944.

representative in the regional office.”⁵⁷ This effectively meant that all projects in Big Bend had to be approved at the regional level, rather than the local level, due to the prospects of Big Bend as a national park. When the acting regional director, Milton J. McColm, wrote to the Secretary of the Texas Big Bend Park Association in March 1940 about the planning and development of the park, this measure had already made a considerable impact. McColm stated that the development of Big Bend as a national park was “no small task and will require considerable comprehensive study” before a firm plan can be decided upon.⁵⁸ While McColm had discussed the various plans and ideas for development within the park, the true extent of them could not be determined by him at that time. Instead, he wanted to spend enough time making sure that the plans for the park were well thought out and did the park justice.

These considerations are best seen in the discussion and plans of trails within the park. In August 1939, four months before a CCC camp was to be re-stationed in Big Bend, discussions were already taking place about trail construction. In a memorandum for the regional director, it was suggested that Dr. Ross A. Maxwell (the regional geologist) “be used advantageously in the planning of [the trail] work because of his familiarity with the area and his appreciation of the scenic values which may be utilized” if the trails in the park were “judiciously located.”⁵⁹ Thus, it can be seen that the CCC considered how to utilize its resources in the planning of Big Bend best and kept the ultimate goal of a national park in its sights.

In May 1940, when trail construction was well underway, the CCC issued recommendations for the trails’ progress. In a technical comment by the engineering branch, it

⁵⁷ Memorandum for the Regional Director, Region III from Conrad Wirth, February 23, 1940, 600.003 (CCC) Development Outline, Records of Region III (Southwest Region), National Archives, Denver, CO.

⁵⁸ Letter to Harry Connelly from Milton J. McColm, March 16, 1940, 600.003 (CCC) Development Outline.

⁵⁹ Memorandum for Regional Director, Region 3 from C.P. Russell, August 10, 1939, 601-03 (CCC) Camp Sites, Records of Region III (Southwest Region), National Archives, Denver, CO.

noted that since the trails “will be built in an area which will ultimately be a national park, it is recommended that the standards for trail construction in national park areas be followed.” More so, it urged the “Project Superintendent, Landscape Architect and any foreman that will be intimately connected with trail construction, go to Chiricahua National Monument ... to observe the methods used in trail construction there.” It recommended Chiricahua National Monument because they believed that “some of the best trail construction in the National Park Service system has been done there.”⁶⁰ It is thus clear that the CCC intended to build trails that best took advantage of the scenic beauties available, through the use of people like Dr. Maxwell, as well as those trails that would best fit the character of both Big Bend and the NPS.

The CCC and the NPS had ambitious plans for Big Bend, some of which would not be completed by the CCC companies stationed in the park. While the CCC could only complete a portion of these projects, in their planning they embodied the ideas set forth by the NPS in landscape architecture, worked to best fit the needs of the national park at the time (preserving the landscape and providing access to it at the same time), and in the process both considered the public’s wishes and garnered their support. The true effectiveness of their planning and partial execution is best seen through the work that they completed during the tenure of the companies in the park, the focus of the next chapter.

⁶⁰ Technical Comment – Engineering, May 17, 1940, 600 (CCC) Lands, Buildings, Roads, & Trails, Records of Region III (Southwest Region), National Archives, Denver, CO.

CHAPTER 3

BUILDING A PARK

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) sought to put young men to work in state and national parks across the country. In these parks, CCC enrollees constructed roads, trails, buildings, and other necessary infrastructure projects. These jobs aligned with and were parts of the larger overall master plans created for the parks that described and laid out the ultimate goals for them. In the case of Big Bend, the CCC focused its construction efforts in the Basin area of the park. Here, the CCC built several trails, cabins, other buildings including a museum, and the various infrastructure needed to support said projects. Additionally, the CCC created the Green Gulch Road leading into the Basin, which served as the entrance road into the heart of the new national park. These projects originated from the plans discussed in the previous chapter and were at the center of the work in the CCC camp. In completing these projects, the CCC effectively built Big Bend National Park.

The average enrollee was twenty years old when he first entered the CCC. He came from a family of six children, and his father was unemployed. Each enrollee had been unemployed for at least nine months. Several months prior to entering the camp, the enrollee had applied for the CCC at the local selection office, overseen by the Department of Labor. For up to two months, his application was processed, at which point, if accepted, he would have been sent to an Army conditioning camp. Here, the enrollee underwent a physical examination, was given clothes, and if it was determined that he could live up to the somewhat rigorous demands of the CCC, he was formally enrolled and sent to a work camp – like Big Bend National Park.¹

¹ John A. Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1967), 135; Melissa Bass, *The Politics and Civics of National Service: Lessons from the Civilian Conservation Corps, VISTA, and AmeriCorps* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2013), 67-71.

Each day while in the camp, CCC enrollees woke up at 6:00 A.M., reported to physical exercise training at 6:30, and then went to the mess hall for breakfast. By 7:45 A.M., enrollees were departing the camp for the work site. How far the project was from camp determined if the enrollees walked or were trucked out to the location. Around noon, work was halted for lunch, which was eaten at the job site. The meal break typically lasted for an hour, after which work resumed and continued until approximately 4:00 P.M., when the enrollees returned to camp. Enrollees would have free time until around 5:30 when dinner was served, again eaten in the mess hall. After eating, enrollees would have time to participate in education classes until lights out at 10:00 P.M. – though after a full day’s work, enrollees were welcome to turn in sooner.²

Each enrollee’s day was full of activity, especially on the job site. As can be seen, the typical enrollee could be at or on the way to the job site for eight hours each day. While not all eight of these hours would be spent working on various projects, enrollees had to travel to the job site and eat lunch, which still left a considerable amount of time available for work to be done. Granted, work-days were limited to the week, with weekends reserved for other activities (such as sports), but this still provided time for a considerable amount of work to be completed within the parks. Thus, working, while it did not take up all of the time, was central to CCC camp life.

Work days, referred to as man-days by the CCC administration, were a common form of measurement within project planning. When preparing plans for a project and its approval, the CCC would allocate funds, materials, equipment, and man-days for each project. Furthermore, when a project got behind schedule for any reason and required a re-allocation of resources, man-days were a common request. These allocation requests and the subsequent completion records show how much labor the CCC put into each project. It can then be seen which projects

² Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*, 137-141.

could be considered ‘major’ or ‘minor’ based on the number of man-days expended in their completion.

Projects were designed to align with CCC and NPS standards and ideas of landscape architecture, planning, and park development. With these goals in mind, the CCC camps worked to complete the projects. However, issues would inevitably arise, and plans would have to then be adjusted. This chapter seeks to describe the various projects completed by the CCC at Big Bend National Park, how they were constructed, and how, if necessary, they adjusted the original plans for the park. Through this discussion, the unique character of the landscape of Big Bend becomes apparent. Plans had to be adjusted based on circumstances created by the local conditions and were individualized to the circumstances. So while the planning of Big Bend National Park followed ideas for a larger national system, the construction of projects led to the uniqueness of the park becoming more apparent and playing a larger role in its development.

As much as the CCC and NPS had planned the developments for Big Bend, much of this had been done while not having a clear idea of what the situation actually was in the park. One issue that plagued the development of Big Bend was land ownership, as the area was in both private and public (Texas) hands. The CCC was hesitant to develop the park if they were unsure of who owned the land – why would they develop lands that would not be a part of the park? The CCC’s goal was not to develop private lands; rather, it was to develop state and national parks. So, then it became extremely important for the CCC to survey the proposed park – what were the boundaries, who owned what land, where could they build projects? As a result, surveys, while they did not transform the land, were a necessary project within the CCC camp. For the purposes of this study, surveys refer to lineal surveys, topographic surveys, hydraulic research, geological investigations, and archeological investigations. These various projects all worked toward the

same goals: mapping the park, understanding its landscape, and helping to plan its development.

Lineal surveys served to map the boundaries of the park, meaning that they worked to delineate which lands were owned by the state and which were owned by private individuals. As Big Bend National Park when it was first set aside was somewhat of a patchwork quilt of land ownership, the boundaries had to be determined. Additionally, as park development progressed, especially as the prospect of a national park drew closer, these boundaries became extremely important. Lineal (boundary) surveys had almost a consistent presence within Big Bend and were present in both iterations of the CCC camp. Initially, in 1935, their purpose was to “determine boundary lines of land sections” due to “the intermingling of State owned sections with those of private owners” and the absence of surveys.³ Yet, by the second iteration of the camp, the focus had shifted to determining “the west boundary of the proposed park,” a large project that included “approximately 65 miles of boundary line.”⁴ In fact, as the second iteration of the camp entered Big Bend, it was deemed to be of the utmost importance that boundary surveys “be set up at once.”⁵ Thus, these surveys were seen as necessary to understand where park development could occur, and so they would effectively determine the progress of the CCC camp for the aforementioned reasons.

Topographic surveys worked to map out the landscape of the park. Prior to this, the maps of the area were poor – either they were non-existent, or they were poorly done. In justifying the project, the CCC noted that there was “no accurate data of this kind available.”⁶ Without these

³ Project Estimate and Allotment Request – Lineal Survey, October 8, 1935, General Part IV, Records of Region III (Southwest Region), National Archives, Denver, CO.

⁴ Record of Inspection, February 19-22, 1940, 204-1 (CCC) By Field Officers, Records of Region III (Southwest Region), National Archives, Denver, CO.

⁵ Record of Inspection, January 25, 1940, 204-1 (CCC) By Field Officers, Records of Region III (Southwest Region), National Archives, Denver, CO.

⁶ Project Estimate and Allotment Request – Topographic Survey, October 8, 1935, General Part IV.

surveys, the CCC would not be able to plan and execute the various projects in the park properly. It is difficult to plan the proper route for a trail or a road without understanding the landscape of the area. Grade (or slope) was an important concept to incorporate into the developments of roads and trails, and this could not be properly understood without topographic surveys. One planning document defined the project “as to establish correct data for mapping and for future development over the entire area.”⁷ Therefore, topographic surveys affected the progress and development of the park by determining how and where project developments would occur.

Hydraulic research was centered around determining the location of springs and their flows in order to plan the development of wells in the Basin area. Water was crucial to the development of Big Bend, one of the original locations for the CCC camp in Big Bend was denied due to a lack of water sources. Thus, the Basin had to have enough water to support a CCC camp for it to be approved. When such a source was found, the CCC camp moved in, and they began to look for other sources to support the future developments. Since the CCC and NPS envisioned Big Bend as the site of a future hacienda-style lodge, a suitable water source was needed, as it would be for all future developments – tourists and the running of a park requires water, which needed to be found. As such, hydraulic research became an important project in determining the future capacities of the park.

While hydraulic research may have been a short-lived project in terms of man-days and lifespan, it did lead to the development of a well, a necessary part of the CCC camp and park’s infrastructure. Three wells were originally dug during the first iteration of the camp, which were expected to supply the camp and “probably be sufficient for public use in the future.” Based on

⁷ Submission of Projects for Approval – SP-33-Big Bend – Texas, April 8, 1936, Project 1021, Records of Region III (Southwest Region), National Archives, Denver, CO.

plans for the development of the park, however, this was not ideal. The CCC during the second iteration created a project to drill “an additional deep well further to the south in the Basin and nearer to the proposed lodge development,” hoping this would be “sufficient to supply all future needs for the Basin development.”⁸ In June 1940, enrollees resumed work on the well; it was already at a depth of sixty feet, but the CCC was making it deeper.⁹ By August, they had drilled to a depth of 385 feet and had a flow of twenty-five to thirty gallons per minute.¹⁰ While the eventual completion of the well was delayed due to the contractor’s obligations elsewhere, this did not hold up the progress on the development of the water system in the park.¹¹ It can then be seen that while hydraulic research may not have been perhaps the most significant project, it did lead to and facilitate necessary future developments in infrastructure.

Geological and archeological investigations sought to understand the landscape and resources of the park. It is important to consider the goals of any national park – to preserve scenic and cultural landscapes while at the allowing access for visitors. Thus, these projects worked to determine what was in the park and how to best protect it. For example, the geological investigation determined the location of petrified trees and fossil remains in the park, which were expected to “add materially to interest in the area, and [were] of great value in future planning.”¹² The archeological investigation discovered the location of various caves and campsites in the park which would be “available for future scientific investigations... to secure

⁸ Letter to Harry Connelly from Milton J. McColm, March 16, 1940, 600.003 (CCC) Development Outline.

⁹ Record of Inspection, June 21-22, 1940, 204-1 (CCC) By Field Officers.

¹⁰ Record of Inspection, August 6, 1940, 204-1 (CCC) By Field Officers.

¹¹ Memorandum for the Regional Director, Region III from Kirk Scott, February 17, 1941, 303-13 (CCC) Claims, Settlement of, Records of Region III (Southwest Region), National Archives, Denver, CO.

¹² Report of Project completion – Geological Investigation, September 22, 1936, DSP-1, Records of Region III (Southwest Region), National Archives, Denver, CO.

specimens for museum or study.”¹³ Though these projects were minor in terms of man-days expended (only twenty and forty-six, respectively), they did have a considerable impact on how the park would progress. A museum to house specimen from the park entered into the NPS plans and geological concerns began to be taken into account for the development of other projects. So, while these two projects may not initially appear to be of value to the planning of Big Bend National Park, they did, in fact, become determining factors in its development.

These surveys, while they are not the most visible of projects, were extremely important for the development of Big Bend and the execution of projects by the CCC. Many of the surveys overlapped in the areas measured and the results – where to build projects and how to build them. These surveys thus affected all projects, and their impact can be seen indirectly throughout the camp. These surveys also allowed for the implementation of the CCC and NPS’s plans for the park, as without them planners would be unsure as to where developments could even occur. So, these projects were crucial for the development of Big Bend National Park and would lay the foundation for all other projects completed by the CCC and later in the future.

Green Gulch Road was one of the largest and most important projects completed by the CCC in Big Bend. Prior to the construction of this road, there was no easy access into the Basin, the planned center of the park and the location of the CCC camp. Additionally, the section of the park through which the road traveled was rough, making the road an absolute necessity. The first project estimate and allotment request for the proposed park road, on June 17, 1935, justified the construction of it as it was “necessary for entrance into proposed building site and to provide safe travel into and out of the Park.”¹⁴ Construction soon began and became one of the principal

¹³ Report of Project completion – Archeological Investigation, September 22, 1936, DSP-1.

¹⁴ Project estimate and allotment request – Park Road, June 17, 1935, General Part IV.

projects of the CCC during its first iteration in Big Bend.

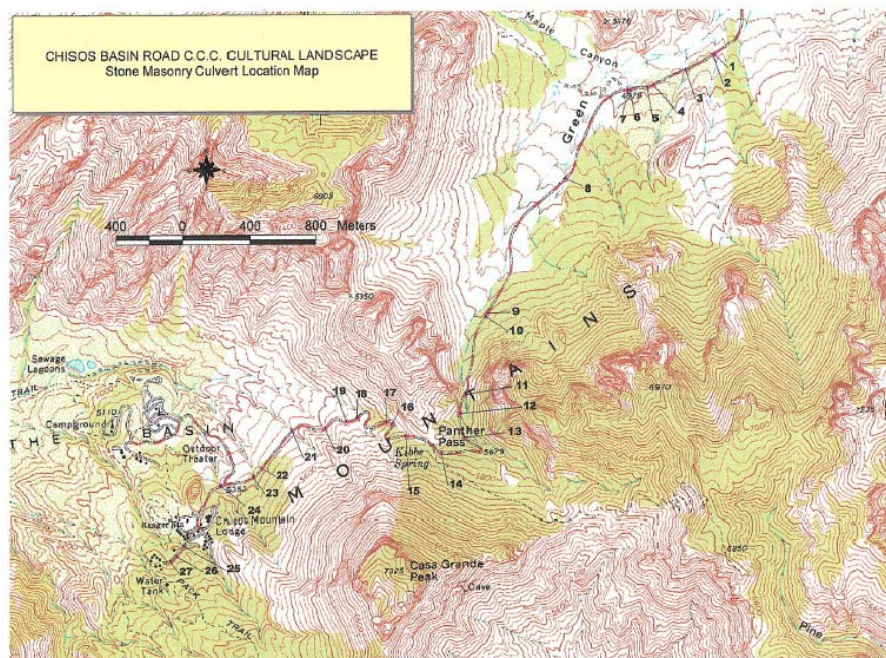


Figure 4: Map of the Green Gulch Road in Big Bend National Park. This map shows the Green Gulch Road and the location of the culverts along it (denoted by numbers). Thomas C. Alex, *A Short History of the C.C.C. Road Construction in the Chisos Mountains and Description of Contributing Elements for a National Register C.C.C. Cultural Landscape* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, July 2000).

Concerns about the surrounding environment determined the layout and construction of the road throughout its development. Considering the steep grade of the landscape and what was considered safe for car travel at the time, it became necessary for the CCC “to construct several switch-backs on the road” to ensure “the minimum grade up and down the mountain.” This development, however necessary, then necessitated the construction of guard rails along the road. These guard rails served two purposes: the protection of traffic “across fills and on curves” and the “prevention of slides from mountain side onto roadway.” Though this resulted in a slight divergence from original plans, the guard rails still fit into the larger scheme of NPS ideas of landscape architecture. The plan was to build these guard rails from “large native rock,” allowing them to blend into the surrounding scenery.¹⁶

The construction of the park road and its related projects (guard rails and culverts) required the use of a large number of enrollees. Original estimates for the park road believed it would take 6,000 man-days to complete the project.¹⁷ By October 1935, 21,000 man-days had been approved for use on the park road, and another 6,500 were being requested.¹⁸ In March 1936, almost 25,000 man-days had been used, yet they were requesting an additional 6,000. The request was justified due to the fact that the construction of the park road was “very heavy work making it necessary to move forty thousand cubic yards of dirt and six thousand cubic yards of solid rock.”¹⁹ The justification could be seen as necessary since the CCC had expended more

¹⁶ Project estimate and allotment request – Guard Rails, October 8, 1935, General Part IV, Records of Region III (Southwest Region), National Archives, Denver, CO.

¹⁷ Project estimate and allotment request – Park Road, June 17, 1935, General Part IV.

¹⁸ Project estimate and allotment request – Park Road, October 14, 1935, General Part IV.

¹⁹ Project estimate and allotment request – Park Road, March 9, 1936, Project 205 (6), Records of Region III (Southwest Region), National Archives, Denver, CO.

man-days than had been approved by almost 8,000.²⁰ Surprisingly, construction on the guard rails had man-days to spare, only using 660 of the approved 1950.²¹

These projects continued through the end of the first CCC camp in Big Bend, in December 1937. While perhaps construction was not as efficient as the CCC had hoped – for the most part consistently going over the approved number of man-days – the projects were in the end successful. Between May 21, 1934 and December 15, 1937, the CCC in Big Bend National Park constructed seven miles of road. In the process, they also built over 2,500 yards of guard rails and four vehicle bridges – two forty feet in length and two twenty feet in length. The primary construction efforts for the park road had been completed, yet it would remain a part of the CCC camp during its second iteration.²²

By the time the CCC returned to Big Bend in 1940, there were new projects lined up to be completed, yet enrollees would still be involved in the park road. Enrollees were to provide upkeep for the road and construct a new road connecting the original road to the new cabin group being built. Both of these projects began in June 1940 and continued through the second iteration of the CCC camp. In the first month alone, the CCC expended 750 man-days for road maintenance and 227 on the road to the cabins – making them the second and fourth largest projects during that month, respectively.²³ Over the course of the next year (July 1940 to the end of June 1941), 8,523 man-days were spent on these two projects alone, constituting

²⁰ Report of Project Completion – Park Road, March 9, 1936, DSP-1, Records of Region III (Southwest Region), National Archives, Denver, CO.

²¹ Report of Project Completion – Guard Rails, March 9, 1936, DSP-1.

²² CCC Work Accomplished Under the Supervision of the National Park Service May 21, 1934 to December 15, 1937, Development Outline, Records of Region III (Southwest Region), National Archives, Denver, CO.

²³ This is out of a total of ten projects, amounting to a total of 2,720 man-days. Monthly Progress Report, June 1940, 306-03 (CCC) Expenditure Records, Records of Region III (Southwest Region), National Archives, Denver, CO.

approximately sixteen percent of the total for the camp.²⁴ These projects were not the most significant for the park at the time, yet they did constitute a considerable amount of effort and man-days.

Throughout the CCC's tenure in Big Bend, roads were a large portion of the work projects in camp and the resources (including man-days) allotted. By constructing the Green Gulch Road, the CCC allowed access into the Basin area of the park which had largely been determined as the natural hub for all park development, then and in the future. Without this access, it would have not been feasible for the CCC to develop within the Basin as they did, as this was not only the way into the park for tourists but the CCC and their resources. The Green Gulch Road was only one of many projects in Big Bend, but it was one of both a considerable nature and impact.

Trails were understandably a substantial part of Big Bend National Park. In accordance with NPS ideas of preserving natural areas while also allowing access to them, trails were the reasonable approach to these goals. Trails would allow many visitors to see and experience these natural areas and appreciate the scenic views contained within the park, yet they would limit the more impactful ways of access, such as vehicles. Thus, trails can be seen as a true embodiment of NPS ideas of landscape architecture in their planning, execution, and development.

The CCC during its time in Big Bend completed the Lost Mine, Kibbe Springs, and Window trails, according to the rather minimal historiography of the CCC's involvement in Big Bend.²⁵ Due to documents available, it is known that the CCC completed six miles of trails

²⁴ Work Program Outline – Big Bend National Park Project, July 1, 1940 – June 30, 1941, 600.003 (CCC) Development Outline, Records of Region III (Southwest Region), National Archives, Denver, CO.

²⁵ See Thomas C. Alex, *A Short History of the C.C.C. Road Construction in the Chisos Mountains and Description of Contributing Elements for a National Register C.C.C. Cultural Landscape* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, July 2000), 4-5; Thomas C. Alex, *Big Bend National Park and Vicinity* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 74; Ross A. Maxwell, *Big Bend Country: A History of Big Bend*

during the first iteration of the park, yet the specifics are left undiscussed.²⁶ During the second iteration of the camp, it is clear that the CCC constructed the Lost Mine trail, and there is ample documentation to support this. Based on construction techniques, it can be determined that both the Kibbe Springs and Window trails were CCC projects, and it then must be assumed that these were built during the first iteration of the camp.

One trail which is absent from the historiography but had a considerable amount of CCC involvement is the South Rim trail. The South Rim was a focal point of development for the NPS and, as a result, the CCC. As previously discussed, officials of both the CCC and the NPS saw the South Rim as one of the most picturesque areas of the United States – making it an obvious location for future development. In doing so, the CCC had to create, at a minimum, an informal trail to the South Rim. Based on fire pre-suppression projects, it is known that the CCC made improvements in Laguna Meadows (which, as previously discussed, was a proposed location for the hacienda-style lodge).²⁷ Efforts were made to extend fire pre-suppression to Mount Emory as well (the highest point in Big Bend National Park), with the full permission of the owner, Homer Wilson.²⁸ Knowing that Mount Emory was not a part of the state-owned lands, all travel to the South Rim would thus be forced through Laguna Meadows. Today, one route visitors can take to the South Rim is through Laguna Meadows. Based on these developments, it is not a far stretch to presume that the CCC either blazed or formalized the trail to the South Rim following this route. Though they may not have ‘constructed’ it, and even taking into consideration that this

National Park (Big Bend National Park: Big Bend Natural History Association, 1985), 66; James Wright Steely, *Parks for Texas: Enduring Landscapes of the New Deal* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), 200-201.

²⁶ CCC Work Accomplished Under the Supervision of the National Park Service May 21, 1934 to December 15, 1937, Development Outline.

²⁷ Job Completion Record – Fire Pre-suppression, October 13, 1941, 883-02 (CCC) Protection Improvements, Records of Region III (Southwest Region), National Archives, Denver, CO.

²⁸ Job Application – Fire Pre-suppression, January 1940, 883-02 (CCC) Protection Improvements.

trail does not have serious trail improvements (like culverts and stonework), the CCC certainly had a role in its development.

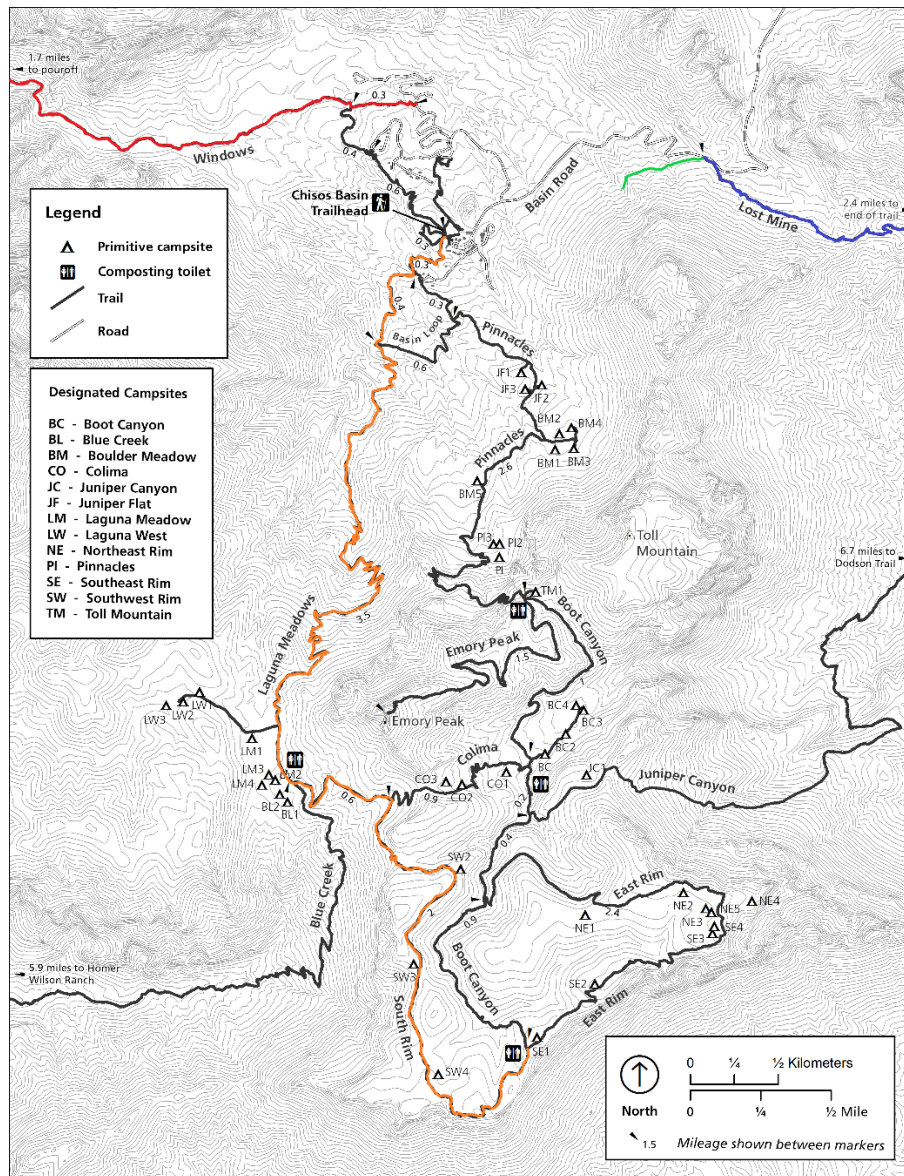


Figure 5: Map of CCC Trails in the Basin. This denotes the approximate location of the CCC constructed trails in the Basin – Blue: Lost Mine Trail (some of the trail is not pictured), Red: Window Trail (some of the trail is not pictured), Orange: South Rim Trail (argued here to be a CCC project), Green: Kibbe Springs Trail (since this is unmaintained, this is approximate). Coloration done by the author, Kimberly Jackson. Map from: Maps, Big Bend National Park, National Park Service, accessed March 9, 2019, <https://www.nps.gov/bibe/planyourvisit/maps.htm>.

One incident to support this supposition is a visit by Dr. Herman C. Bumpus, an NPS official, to Big Bend in December 1934. A. F. Ahrens, a CCC inspector and landscape architect,

took Bumpus on a tour of the park. He noted that the “view from the South Rim and the Lookout tower gave [Bumpus] a pretty good idea of the country.”²⁹ While the lookout tower was later dismantled because it was decided to be unnecessary and it did not fit the landscape, this does show development out at the South Rim.³⁰

In a later letter from Herbert Maier to Ahrens, he wrote that “the trail construction work is by no means up to National Park standard.” He recommended that Ahrens “go to the Grand Canyon pretty soon and observe the trail construction there,” for it was “perhaps the best trail work” he had seen. He understood that Superintendent Robert D. Morgan of the Big Bend camp “is anxious to do the best work possible,” but that it was up to Ahrens and the rest of the CCC to provide Morgan with exact plans and designs. Maier closed his letter by saying that, “the trail from the basin over to the south rim should be a masterpiece. There is no reason why it should not be the best National Park trail so far constructed, as you certainly have plenty of precedent to go by if only you can be shown it, and you have no end of labor.”³¹ Again, this indicates trail construction out to the South Rim. While this may not have been up to the standards of the NPS at the time, it does demonstrate that the CCC did develop a trail to the South Rim, presumably through Laguna Meadows.

In comparison, the Lost Mine trail is a prime example of CCC trail construction efforts in Big Bend. Construction of the Lost Mine trail began in May 1940, initially planned for 6.2 miles and later increased to 7.2 miles.³² A field technician noted that “all trail construction should be

²⁹ Letter to Herbert Maier from A.F. Ahrens, January 24, 1935, DSP-1.

³⁰ For information on the lookout, see Letter to Herbert Maier from A.F. Ahrens, February 16, 1935, DSP-1; Letter to Herbert Maier from A.F. Ahrens, March 4, 1935, DSP-1.

³¹ Letter to A.F. Ahrens from Herbert Maier, January 28, 1935, DSP-1.

³² Job Application – Horse Trails (Lost Mine Peak), May 9, 1940, 600 (CCC) Lands, Buildings, Roads, & Trails, Records of Region III (Southwest Region), National Archives, Denver, CO; Job Application – Horse Trails (Lost Mine Peak), June 4, 1940, 600 (CCC) Lands, Buildings, Roads, & Trails.

done on National Park standards, maximum grade 15%, with particular attention [to] interesting objectives, landscape features, and drainage problems.”³³ The job application for this trail stated that “the trail will be the standard 4’-0 width,” and that “the slope of the cut will vary according to the hardness of the ground.” At any point where the trail would have to be carried over a gully or drainage point, it would travel on “a wall built of large stones.”³⁴ It can then be seen that the Lost Mine trail worked to align with NPS standards for trails.

In September 1940, the inspector sent to Big Bend noted that “considerable progress” had been made on the Lost Mine trail. More so, he said that “the quality of construction is improving and [a] useful trail of permanent nature is provided.”³⁵ The next month, the inspector determined that the enrollees had gained “a satisfactory grasp of trail construction principles” based on their progress.³⁶ Similar comments were made throughout the progress of the project, indicating sound construction principles and adherence to CCC and NPS standards.

While a clear history of the development of trails by the CCC in Big Bend is still left to be uncovered, some facts are apparent. The CCC constructed at least the Lost Mine, Kibbe Springs, and Window trails, and there exists substantial evidence to suggest that they also built, at least in some manner, the South Rim trail. In that work, the CCC attempted to follow NPS standards, and in the case of the Lost Mine trail was successful. More so, due to the extensive surveys of the area, original plans did not have to be adjusted, as these points were determined to be scenic points of interest and the trails followed along approved lines, adhering to NPS ideas throughout the process.

³³ Field Technicians’ Comment – John H. Diehl, May 6, 1940, 204-1 (CCC) By Field Officers.

³⁴ Job Application – Horse Trails (Lost Mine Peak), May 9, 1940, 600 (CCC) Lands, Buildings, Roads, & Trails.

³⁵ Record of Inspection, September 25-27, 1940, 204-1 (CCC) By Field Officers.

³⁶ Record of Inspection, October 14-15, 1940, 204-1 (CCC) By Field Officers.

Essential for the development of Big Bend National Park were lodging accommodations. As previously discussed, these constituted a large part of the CCC and NPS plans for the park as well as a considerable part of the promotion efforts by Texas newspapers. While grand ideas of a hacienda-style lodge and cabin groups had been a part of the discussion since the beginning, the construction of such projects did not begin until the second iteration of the camp. Additionally, construction efforts were limited to the construction of six cabins and the lodge remained a mere idea for the CCC, as they never had the time to start on the project. This did not, however, deter CCC efforts, making the cabins one of the main projects for the second iteration of the camp.

Beginning in April 1940, plans for the construction of the cabins and the adobe bricks for them had already begun.³⁷ Two months later, approximately 15,000 adobe bricks had been made, and by August the excavation of six cabin sites had been nearly completed as had been the foundations for two of the cabins.³⁸ Despite the progress on the cabins, in September, a CCC official noted that the cabins were “not in accordance with the effect that [the designers] had hoped to obtain.” While the foundations were “well underway,” the walls were “being constructed of a very hard, light colored limestone” that was “being laid in an ashler pattern.”³⁹ Another CCC official wrote that “the drawings were not carefully studied in regard to the type of masonry desired and the pattern used is both inconsistent with material available and the character of the building.” He then argued that “the masonry on these buildings is of sufficient importance in establishing a precedent for future construction to warrant reconstruction of a large

³⁷ Record of Inspection, April 23-24, 1940, 204-1 (CCC) By Field Officers.

³⁸ Record of Inspection, June 21-22, 1940, 204-1 (CCC) By Field Officers; Record of Inspection, August 6, 1940, 204-1 (CCC) By Field Officers.

³⁹ Field Report – Plans and Design Division, Big Bend National Park Project by John Kell, September 17-19, 1940, 204-1 (CCC) By Field Officers.

part of it.”⁴⁰ Although the original efforts at construction were not up to NPS standards, the CCC worked to correct their work and more appropriately align with NPS ideas.

As a result of these proceedings Lyle Bennett, one of the CCC officials, clearly defined and laid out the expectations for the cabins and their construction. Bennett discussed the two types of stone available in the area – white and weathered – and where each should be used in the construction of the cabins. He said that the weathered stone should “produce an irregular line and some splay to the wall” when it “occasionally” projects “beyond the foundation line.” At no point should it be straight or at an even grade. Bennett then described how the transition from it into the white stone and the white stone into the adobe bricks should “not be sharp but should be an irregular horizontal or stepped transition.” Additionally, he envisioned the stones as steadily decreasing in size as they progressed in height on the cabin walls with careful attention being made to ensure that the “stones are laid horizontally and on their natural bed.” Bennett cautioned that work on the cabins should proceed carefully “until the quality of masonry and adobes has improved.”⁴¹ Obviously it was a priority to align with NPS ideas of landscape architecture. The cabins were meant to blend into the surrounding scenery, which could only be accomplished with seemingly natural placements and smooth transitions between stones, and to embody the character of the landscape, which would come with the use of natural materials. Slowing the progress of construction, showed the level of importance that these developments had – it was worth delaying completion to ensure that the end product was consistent with NPS ideas and standards.

⁴⁰ Field Report – Plans and Design Division, Big Bend National Park Project by Lyle Bennett, September 17-19, 1940, 204-1 (CCC) By Field Officers.

⁴¹ Field Report – Plans and Design Division, Big Bend National Park Project by Lyle Bennett, September 17-19, 1940, 204-1 (CCC) By Field Officers.

The adjustments recommended by the CCC officials slowed the progress of the cabins. At the end of September 1940, a CCC inspector noted that the cabins were “progressing slowly due largely to [the] inexperience of enrollees in masonry.”⁴² The next month, the superintendent of the camp, Kirk S. Scott, implemented efforts to better blend the cabins in with the surrounding scenery, an obvious embodiment of NPS landscape architecture ideas. The CCC inspector wrote that this “definitely slowed up the work and delayed progress but undoubtedly will accomplish more satisfactory appearing structures.”⁴³ By November, two months after the adjustment in construction and six months after the creation of the project, four cabins were ready for adobe bricks.⁴⁴

It was here though that progress on the cabins seemed to slow considerably. An inspector reported in January 1941 that there was “ample justification for the construction of the walls of one or more of the cabins with stone masonry pending the manufacture and drying of adobe brick which meet the requirements set up.”⁴⁵ The next month, it was noted that the “laying of adobe will not be undertaken until the brick have been checked by representative from Region III Headquarters.”⁴⁶ Thus, while construction was seemingly progressing, in many areas it was, in fact, stalling. In an effort to meet the expectations of the NPS, the regional office of the CCC had to make sure that the adobe bricks made in the park were up to standard. Perhaps this appears as unnecessary bureaucratic oversight, yet at the same time, it can be seen as an insurance policy. Previously the CCC had to re-work their construction efforts on the cabins, and it would be a

⁴² Record of Inspection, September 25-27, 1940, 204-1 (CCC) By Field Officers.

⁴³ Record of Inspection, October 14-15, 1940, 204-1 (CCC) By Field Officers.

⁴⁴ Record of Inspection, November 12, 1940, 204-1 (CCC) By Field Officers.

⁴⁵ Record of Inspection, January 9-10, 1941, 204-1 (CCC) By Field Officers.

⁴⁶ Record of Inspection, February 4-5, 1941, 204-1 (CCC) By Field Officers.

waste of labor and materials if this occurred again. In the end, the goal was not only to create cabins that aesthetically blended into the surrounding area (a tenet of landscape architecture) but to employ men and develop a park in the most efficient manner – as such, these actions are then understandable.

If there were any issues in the construction of the cabins following the adjustment of construction efforts in September 1940, it was the levels of perfection that the CCC was trying to achieve. Ross A. Maxwell, the regional geologist, visited the park and observed adobe-making operations. He remarked that the adobes made by the CCC were “excellent as compared with most adobes,” yet Maxwell was concerned. He wrote that the enrollees were “attempting what is almost ‘the impossible,’ an adobe brick with perfectly square corners, straight surfaces, and sharp edges that can be laid in a wall as perfectly as high-grade brick.”⁴⁷ Later, McColm, the associate regional director, wrote that he was “primarily concerned with the character of work being done on the overnight cabins,” however, it was not for the same reasons as before. In fact, McColm felt that the cabins were “too sophisticated” and that the same character of buildings would be “very difficult to continue, or duplicate,” without the use of CCC labor or something similar. As a result, he recommended that for future construction projects “the same high caliber of finish” not be continued, “setting a more reasonable character of finish” for the future.⁴⁸ It seems strange that within less than a year the CCC was no longer concerned about poor quality construction by enrollees and instead was worried about the expectations for excellence being set. If anything, this says more about the CCC enrollees themselves and the quality of work that they could achieve. Not only did their efforts coincide with principles of landscape architecture,

⁴⁷ Memorandum for the Regional Director from Ross Maxwell, March 17, 1941, 204-1 (CCC) By Field Officers.

⁴⁸ Memorandum for the Regional Director from Milton McColm, May 5, 1941, 204-1 (CCC) By Field Officers.

but they produced projects of such a high caliber that the CCC was concerned about the NPS being able to replicate such a character in future developments.

The idea of the character of buildings and NPS standards was nothing new for the CCC in Big Bend. With the cabins, the CCC finally achieved if not surpassed these standards – perhaps causing its own set of issues in the process. Everything in the CCC had to meet NPS standards, although not every project did. In 1935, after the receipt of blueprints for the shelter at Big Bend, Herbert Maier wrote to George Nason on his thoughts about it. Maier wrote that the plans were “obviously” impossible because it “certainly looks like Hell.” It was unfathomable for Maier to even think about putting such a design into a national park because it certainly did not match the ideas set forth by himself and the rest of the CCC to match NPS standards. He noted that it was “a vertical rather than horizontal element” and, more importantly, that the “rocks are all out of scale.” He assumed that the CCC enrollees were still using “the small pellets that they started out with” because “no one down there seems to have grasped the idea of scale.” He understood that perhaps it would be difficult to get “big rocks,” but that they had to adjust, nonetheless. Maier wrote that they “would never get away with using the size of stuff that is restricted to city parks,” and cancelled work on the shelter immediately.⁴⁹

In response to the poor quality of work being done on the shelter, Maier decided the first thing that needed to be done was to “get an architect down there.” As he did “not intend to let them start any buildings whatever until they have an architect, and a good one.”⁵⁰ Maier was caught up in the quality of the work being done and wanted to ensure that things were done correctly. It was his priority, and as the regional director that of the CCC as well, that

⁴⁹ Letter to George Nason from Herbert Maier, February 18, 1935, DSP-1.

⁵⁰ Letter to George Nason from Herbert Maier, February 18, 1935, DSP-1.

construction projects be executed to the standards of the NPS. It was unacceptable to Maier to have a CCC project exist in a national park when it was only of ‘city park’ standards. Thus, not only did projects have to embrace ideas of landscape architecture, but they had to meld with NPS standards as well.

One project that clearly embodied NPS ideas of what a national park should be was the park museum. The NPS aimed to preserve the resources contained in parks and educate visitors about them, which is best seen in their practices of interpretation. Out of this comes the inherent value placed in trailside and central museums within the national parks. As has been discussed previously, Big Bend National Park contained various artifacts and resources that could be displayed in museums (as discovered in the geological and archeological investigations), and museums were a topic of discussion (like the one proposed at the South Rim). Thus, it is not surprising that the museum was of significant importance to the CCC.

During the first iteration of the camp, the CCC constructed a museum structure to house various specimens collected in the park. When the camp shut down, the museum did not close with it. Instead the CCC appointed a caretaker, Lloyd Wade, who maintained the camp and “served as museum attendant.” In 1940, when the CCC re-occupied the camp, Superintendent Kirk S. Scott envisioned the enrollees as the perfect resource for the museum. Scott proposed to “instruct and trail a couple of enrollees who would meet the public, explain the displays in an intelligent manner, and keep the place in a presentable condition.”⁵¹

In the application for the job of museum attendant, formally title Education Guide and Contact Station Work, it detailed the responsibilities and expectations for the position. Training

⁵¹ Memorandum for Acting Regional Director from Kirk Scott, March 11, 1940, 830 (CCC) Service to Public (General), Records of Region III (Southwest Region), National Archives, Denver, CO.

would be given to “at least 3 intelligent enrollees who have pleasing personalities and who are neat and clean in appearance.” These enrollees would be knowledgeable about two things: the specimens contained in the museum and the park as a whole, including proposed developments. They would then be able to lead visitors through the museum and feasibly answer any questions they may have – effectively serving as CCC interpretive rangers for the park. This may appear as a frivolous expense of CCC labor and man-days, yet it was justified. The museum was “one of the few features in the proposed park that is accessible by improved road practically every visitor to the Area goes through the Museum.” From June 1 to July 10, 1940, alone, the museum guest book had 441 visitor signatures, clearly warranting the use of enrollees as attendants.⁵²

While not a construction project, the job of a museum attendant served as an example of the larger goals of the CCC in the development of the park. Big Bend was, at the time of the creation of the attendant position, a national park awaiting land titles and undergoing a massive transformation (considering its previously undeveloped nature). In becoming a national park, Big Bend was being introduced to the public, and the CCC felt it necessary to enhance the process. Enrollees were to be trained in not only the specimens contained in the museum but in the park as a whole. In this position, the enrollees who worked in the museum essentially became the face of Big Bend to the public – similar to a National Park ranger today. Although not official members of the NPS, these enrollees served to promote the ideas of the NPS, just as other projects served to embody them.

The CCC, during its time in Big Bend, completed several projects, many of which would come to define the park. More than this though, these projects were physical manifestations of NPS ideas at the time. The CCC and the NPS could plan for Big Bend National Park as much as

⁵² Job Application – Education, Guide, Cont. Stat. Work, July 26, 1940, 830 (CCC) Service to Public (General).

they wanted, yet it took the efforts of CCC enrollees to complete them. These projects served as examples of landscape architecture at the time and the visions for national park development as held by the NPS. Through an analysis of these projects it is seen, not only how the plans for the park were executed, but how Big Bend National Park serves as an example of what a national park was envisioned to be during the New Deal era. In the process of constructing these projects, the CCC enrollees did more than just build a park. While this is, no doubt, significant, especially in terms of this study, it is not the only outcome. The CCC enrollees, through their labor on many projects, learned various skills. These skills did not develop on their own, however, and this is the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

“THE GOOD IT WILL DO THE ENROLLEES”: EDUCATION IN THE CCC CAMP AT BIG BEND

Herbert Maier, a regional officer for the Emergency Conservation Works, following a trip in July 1935 to the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp at Big Bend (then SP-33) wrote to L. W. Rogers, educational advisor for the Eighth Corps Area. He noted that “the Superintendent, as well as others” asked him “to do everything” in his power to “obtain an Educational Adviser for them at the camp.” He wrote that they were “exceedingly anxious” since their last one was transferred to another camp earlier in the year, and the position had been left vacant ever since. Maier referenced the “good it will do the enrollees” and how it was “bound to aid the general tone of the camp.” He closed his letter by telling Rogers that he would “appreciate anything [he] could do to provide an Educational Adviser for the Big Bend SP-33 Camp.”¹ It may be seen as a cause for concern that such a letter even needed writing, yet Rogers noted that “no appointments had been made since March 31st” – approximately four months prior. Rogers expected to assign an adviser to Big Bend around the first of August, fulfilling the wants of those at the camp. The placement of an educational adviser at Big Bend would allow the enrollees access to education, one that they desired and the CCC sought to provide them.²

According to CCC publications, the average CCC enrollee had only an eighth-grade education.³ In a study of former Texas CCC enrollees, fifty-three percent were school dropouts.⁴

¹ Letter from Herbert Maier to L.W. Rogers, July 19, 1935, BIBE General Misc., Records of Region III (Southwest Region), National Archives, Denver, CO.

² Letter from L.W. Rogers to Herbert Maier, July 25, 1935, BIBE General Misc.

³ John A. Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1967), 135.

⁴ Mary L. Wilson, “Texans and the Civilian Conservation Corps: Personal Memories,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 117 (October 2013): 159.

The CCC, thus, had to address education levels in its efforts to employ young men and make them more qualified employees later. Undoubtedly, enrollees would gain valuable job skills and experience through their time in the CCC. The question then became what more would they gain through their enrollment? The CCC viewed education as a way to enrich the enrollees and to ensure proper job execution in the process.

Education existed as a central part of the CCC, in both the goals of the administration and as a staple in the camps. The CCC viewed education as a means to best execute the jobs and projects at hand as well as an opportunity to prepare enrollees for employment after their time with the CCC. As such, the CCC approached education in two ways: traditional classroom instruction and vocational training. It was the hope of the CCC that, through proper training and education, enrollees would leave the CCC as good American citizens who were equipped with job training and valuable skills. Their newfound knowledge would then allow them to gain employment and help to draw the nation out of the Great Depression.⁵

This chapter uses education to better understand the experiences of the CCC enrollees in Big Bend National Park and the role of the national organization in the camp. As has been previously discussed, the CCC was organized at several different levels – national, regional, and camp – education would be planned and executed by all three. By analyzing the educational efforts, both classroom and vocational, at Big Bend the influence of each level can be seen. Moreover, the federal government in creating the CCC had specific ideas in mind, namely,

⁵ For information on the CCC and education, see Melissa Bass, *The Politics and Civics of National Service: Lessons from the Civilian Conservation Corps, VISTA, and AmeriCorps* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2013); Charles Price Harper, "The Administration of the Civilian Conservation Corps," Ph.D. diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1937; Neil M. Maher, *Nature's New Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*; John C. Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Park Service, 1933-1942: An Administrative History* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1985).

creating good, educated American citizen. Through a discussion of education efforts in Big Bend, the effectiveness of these measures can be determined.

From the start, education was proposed as a substantial part of the CCC program. Though differences arose between the CCC and the Army (who was in charge of the administration of the camps themselves), a plan was eventually put forward by the federal government. Initially, education in the CCC was voluntary, taking place after work hours in the camps. Under the auspices of the Army, camp educational advisers would report to camp commanders, who would then report to corps area commanders and the Office of Education. With educational needs and levels varying between and within camps, camp educational advisers struggled to create programs and education faltered.⁶ That is not to say that education as a whole failed in the CCC. In 1937, the CCC restructured its education program in an effort for it to be more successful. Education became mandatory rather than optional, and courses became more centralized and structured in the process.⁷ As a result, in the fiscal year 1938-1939, “8,445 enrollees were taught to read and write, and 763 were awarded college scholarships.” Vocational training was successful as well, with the CCC producing 45,000 truck drivers, 7,500 bridge builders, 2,000 bakers, and 1,500 welders each year.⁸

Traditional classroom education efforts in the CCC offered courses from the elementary to college level. These courses sought to provide enrollees with the opportunity to continue or complete their respective schooling efforts, which were often cut short due to the circumstances of the Great Depression. It must, however, be taken into consideration that CCC camps varied immensely in the levels of education present. Camps could contain enrollees who were illiterate

⁶ Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*, 48-54.

⁷ Bass, *The Politics and Civics of National Service*, 65.

⁸ Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*, 167-168.

as well as those who had received some college education. So educational advisers had to consider this as they planned the courses to be offered and how they would be taught. CCC courses, rather than following a traditional model, were based around individual instruction to accommodate these unique circumstances. Yet, it must not be forgotten that education was not the primary focus of the CCC; instead, it was a complementary one. While classes were offered for enrollees to pursue and/or complete their educations, these were not the central feature of the camps and were held after the workday had been completed.⁹

Vocational training, in comparison, could be considered a central focus of the CCC. Enrollees were expected to complete various tasks and projects, for which they feasibly could have little knowledge and experience. As a whole, the CCC built roads, trails, campgrounds, and buildings in national and state parks across the nation. Additionally, it planted billions of trees and enacted soil conservation efforts on millions of acres of land. Enrollees were not required or expected to have knowledge or experience in the jobs that they would be complete during their time in the CCC. Thus, job training was necessary for the completion of projects, and enrollees in the process learned valuable job skills and gained practical experience to help them find employment after their time with the CCC.¹⁰

It is nearly impossible to measure all the long-term benefits and broad effects of the educational efforts of the CCC for several reasons. First, and arguably the most significant, the CCC did not keep records of enrollees after their enrollment had expired. That is to say that enrollees who did not leave the CCC prematurely for other employment opportunities were not

⁹ Harper, "The Administration of the Civilian Conservation Corps," 90; Bass, *The Politics and Civics of National Service*, 64-66; Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Park Service*, 83-88.

¹⁰ For a detailed compilation of work completed by the CCC, see Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Park Service*. Bass, *The Politics and Civics of National Service*, 60-61.

tracked by the administration, so any employment that they gained because of skills they learned in the CCC is unknown. Second, the CCC officially shut down in 1942, after the United States entered World War II. The CCC, because it recruited young men aged eighteen to twenty-five, consisted of men who would later go to war, some of whom would become casualties. These men, then, would not benefit from the education efforts of the CCC as they were never able to reap the full benefits. Similarly, it would additionally be difficult to trace where men gained skills useful for employment – the CCC or the military. Third, the CCC did not keep accurate rosters for education courses. There are no records of which enrollees received what training when, there merely exists the records of what training that was offered, when it was offered, and what it taught. But while it is impossible to give a numerical discussion of the success of the educational efforts of the CCC, that does not mean they were not significant. The education that the enrollees received in the CCC led them to gain employment, for some of which we have records. For those whose employment after the CCC remains unknown, it is not a stretch to think that, like the others, the knowledge and skills gained during their enrollment helped them to do so.

Traditional classroom education, by 1939, had taught 75,000 illiterate enrollees how to read and given an additional 700,000 enrollees the ability to further their education.¹¹ For a secondary goal of the CCC, these numbers are telling. More so, enrollees entered the CCC as unskilled laborers, yet they completed projects that, in most cases, are still functioning today. The completion of the projects alone shows the initial success of educational efforts, and the permanence of them indicates the effectiveness and lasting impact of the CCC's education.

While it can be difficult to determine the true success of CCC education efforts, the goals

¹¹ Numbers come from: Bass, *The Politics and Civics of National Service*, 66.

and implementation of them do work to show how the CCC viewed enrollees and how they hoped to better them and their situations. Through an analysis of various education reports, an understanding can be gained of the courses taught in the camp, how vocational skills were taught in relation to work projects, and how many enrollees left the CCC for employment elsewhere and the relevant education they received in the process. These reports help to highlight the intent of the CCC within their education program and the relative success of it, considering the limited sources available.

Big Bend National Park was not an exception to the CCC's educational efforts. The Big Bend camp offered traditional classroom education as well as vocational training centered on work projects. On-the-job training was specific and focused on the projects at the park, giving enrollees the necessary instruction to complete the job while at the same time working towards making them more suited for future employment. Classroom education, while tailored to the enrollees (as individual instruction was necessary), followed national precedents. In 1937, the CCC formalized an education program, requiring enrollees with less than three years of school to attend courses and all others to take at least one course. Classes themselves became focused on traditional educational material, and less instruction in subjects like hobbies was offered. Prior to this point, courses developed with the enrollee's interests in mind – offering courses on a wide variety of subjects at all levels – rather than with educational goals at the forefront.¹²

In accordance with the formalization of education efforts, the Big Bend camp submitted quarterly camp training reports, which recorded the vocational training offered in the camp for that period and the enrollees who left the camp for employment elsewhere. Camp administrators had to additionally submit educational outlines for job projects, which detailed the on-the-job

¹² Bass, *The Politics and Civics of National Service*, 65.

and off-the-job training the enrollees would receive. Through a compilation of these educational reports and training outlines, the scope and effectiveness of these educational efforts can be determined. It can be seen that not only were educational efforts in Big Bend National Park successful, due to the enrollees finding employment elsewhere, but they were geared toward the overall betterment of the enrollees, through vocational skills and educational advancement.¹³

At Big Bend, enrollees were offered traditional classes at both the elementary and high school level to supplement or complete their prior educations. For example, in February 1940 there were classes in literacy, elementary arithmetic, civics, and grammar. High school courses were offered in algebra, geometry, Texas history, Latin, Spanish, shorthand, and typing. Additionally, there were classes on photography, radio code, and leatherworking. Similar courses were offered in August 1940 – notably with the addition of English, advanced arithmetic, and health. These courses may seem strange for CCC enrollees as they had little to do with the projects occurring in the camp. It must be considered, instead, that many of these courses would be required for traditional education, such as a high school diploma. Some, like radio code and leatherworking, would be traditionally considered hobbies and thus would not contribute to completing formal educations. However, these classes could provide enrollees with skills to acquire jobs or earn money on the side, more so they would provide them with activities to pass the time in camp. Overall, it can be seen that the courses offered in Big Bend helped to provide enrollees with either the formal or vocational education that they previously lacked.¹⁴

¹³ Quarterly reports covered the months: January – March, April – June, July – September, and October to December. From hence forth, they will be referred to as first, second, third, and fourth quarter respectively. For example, for information coming from the quarterly report for January – March 1940 will be referred to as coming from the first quarter of 1940.

¹⁴ CCC Camp Educational Report, February 8, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33, Camp Inspection Reports, 1933-1942, Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps Division of Investigations, National Archives, College Park, MD; CCC Camp Educational Report, August 22, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

As a supplement to these courses, the camp housed a library with more than 600 books and nearly 100 traveling titles that moved between camps. The library also subscribed to (and gave the enrollees access to) four daily newspapers and one weekly newspaper. In February 1940 the Big Bend camp was also subscribed to sixteen magazines, and by August the number grew to twenty-four. It was noted that the camp reading room was “furnished with comfortable chairs” and had “excellent lighting.” Whether it was due to the exceptional reading conditions or not is debatable, but the education efforts and access to such resources were laudable considering in February 1940 the educational advisor commented that “illiteracy is being eliminated” and that in July the enrollees had read thirty books.¹⁵

The courses in the camp were taught by the educational adviser, military staff, and technical personnel for the camp. The teaching staff in February 1940 consisted of fourteen people.¹⁶ While not a paid staff of educators, purely dedicated to courses, this number is still significant. The teaching staff, being composed of camp administrators from both the Army and NPS, shows the commitment of the CCC camp to education. More than just being in charge of camp projects, the administration dedicated their time and effort to leading education classes, working to show the larger goals of the CCC – providing the enrollees with an education as well.

Educational classes were held five nights a week, and a majority of the company attended these courses. For example, in February 1940 the average daily attendance was 162 enrollees and 150 in August – representing roughly 84 percent and 80 percent of the company respectively. More than the CCC merely offering the courses, the enrollees seemed receptive to their efforts. As these classes were not mandatory, the fact that enrollees consistently attended in large

¹⁵ CCC Camp Educational Report, February 8, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33; CCC Camp Educational Report, August 22, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

¹⁶ CCC Camp Educational Report, February 8, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

numbers showed their interest in and commitment to educational efforts and the value they placed in them.¹⁷

In comparison to traditional courses, vocational training was centered around the projects and work being completed in the camp. Training occurred both on- and off-the-job and focused on what the project was doing, how the enrollees would complete it, and why. In structuring the training this way, the camp administration showed how it cared about the enrollees learning as many skills and techniques as they could rather than just learning one aspect of the job. These education efforts would allow the enrollees to have as much job experience and knowledge as they could gain through their time in the CCC. Each project worked towards specific and different goals, but the result was largely the same – enrollees gained valuable skills and work experience, making them more desirable as employees.

One project at Big Bend, the lineal survey, focused on locating and mapping the western boundary of the park. In the process of determining the boundary, camp administrators taught surveying techniques to the enrollees involved in the project. Off-the-job education included instruction in the study of topography, the use and function of tools, duties of survey crews, and safety in conducting surveys. While working enrollees received practical training in the “reconnaissance of all triangulation stations,” the use of instruments and equipment, and map reading. Despite lineal surveying not being a large project or one that required a larger number of enrollees – it had a maximum of twenty enrollees receiving training during the first quarter of 1940, then dropping to only three in the third quarter and four in the fourth quarter – it does showcase how projects helped enrollees to gain marketable skills. Enrollees were not expected to

¹⁷ CCC Camp Educational Report, February 8, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33; CCC Camp Educational Report, August 22, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

assist more skilled employees of the CCC; rather, they were instructed in all matters of the job and the underlying techniques for its prosecution, allowing them to contribute as well. Those enrollees that participated in the lineal surveys could feasibly leave the CCC with experience and knowledge in surveying, helping them to gain employment.¹⁸

Similarly, the hydraulic research project, which sought to determine the volume and seasonal flow of springs and seepage points throughout the Basin area of Big Bend, provided enrollees with a basic education in geology and engineering. On-the-job enrollees were expected to determine and reconnaissance “all prospective springs in the area,” then provide a “detailed analysis of each” and determine their maximum flow. In order to carry out these tasks, enrollees received off-the-job instruction in how to locate springs, how to determine flow, and why these projects were vital for park development. Through this, enrollees gained a rudimentary knowledge of the geological and engineering techniques used to measure springs as well as practical experience. Enrollees also became familiar with United States Geological Survey maps and notation styles, a useful skill for potential future employment. Moreover, they also saw the implications of their work, in a project that was not transformative like construction projects, by understanding the water supply needed for the development of possible park structures in the future. Again, hydraulic research was not significant in the number of enrollees involved – a maximum of fifteen enrollees during the first quarter of 1940 and only two in the third and fourth – yet the skills these few enrollees gained could serve useful to them in the future.¹⁹

¹⁸ Lineal Survey, March 22, 1940, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities, Records of Region III (Southwest Region), National Archives, Denver, CO; Quarterly Report of Enrollee Training by CCC Technical Agencies, March 1940, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities; Quarterly Report of Enrollee Training by CCC Technical Agencies, September 1940, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities; Quarterly Report of Enrollee Training by CCC Technical Agencies, December 1940, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities.

¹⁹ Hydraulic Research – Job 200, February 2, 1940, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities; Quarterly Report of Enrollee Training by CCC Technical Agencies, March 1940, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities; Quarterly Report of Enrollee

The educational training for the experimental plots project was surprisingly intensive considering the goal of the project itself. The experimental plots were created to plant the slopes of the roads in the park with “various types of vegetation indigenous to the area,” a seemingly simple project. Enrollees, however, were not only taught the basics of planting, re-planting, and pruning, but they were additionally taught about landscape architecture and the different plants themselves. Instruction included material on the composition, growth, and death of trees – far more than would be considered necessary to plant a tree. Additionally, enrollees were taught about four grass families and the species included in them, as well as the specific native plants they would be planting. The training and knowledge required may have been seen as excessive for the job at hand, but this level of investment shows the value that CCC placed on education. Had the CCC not valued education efforts, it would be hard to argue for investment in such training programs. The amount of knowledge of native flora required by enrollees to plant along the sides of the roads would have been minimal, yet the CCC did more than just merely telling the enrollees which plants to plant and where. Instead, the CCC thought it was worthwhile to educate the enrollees as best they could and took advantage of the opportunity.²⁰

Big Bend National Park had a unique opportunity for a few of its enrollees, a museum located in the camp. The museum contained various archeological, biological, and geological specimens that were collected from the park itself and was open for visitors. Instead of hiring members of the National Park Service (NPS) to staff the museum, the CCC recruited enrollees, giving two of them the opportunity to serve as guides. For the nine months from October 1940 to June 1941, two enrollees received a total of thirty-eight hours of on-the-job training and twenty-

Training by CCC Technical Agencies, September 1940, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities; Quarterly Report of Enrollee Training by CCC Technical Agencies, December 1940, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities.

²⁰ Experimental Plots 206-1005, April 26, 1940, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities.

five hours off-the-job. Early parts of the training focused on “general information relative to the park area” and then shifted to “very elementary training in the fields of natural science.” It was the opinion of Ross A. Maxwell, the regional geologist, that the camp superintendent could call upon the other regional technicians for help in training when they were in the area. Thus, for a job that would only employ two enrollees, the CCC was open to investing considerable time and resources into training and educating these enrollees. While neither enrollee left the CCC prior to the expiration of their enlistment to pursue employment in the natural sciences or museum work, that is not to say that these efforts were not significant or telling. The willingness of the CCC to educate two enrollees for a museum that would feasibly not receive many visitors and that could be staffed by either full-time employees of the CCC or NPS staff shows the inherent value that the CCC placed in education.²¹ If the CCC did not see the education of its enrollees as important, then it is difficult to understand the camp administration putting such effort into a project that would only involve two enrollees.²²

One area of training that, like the projects mentioned already, may not have provided many enrollees with employment causing them to leave the CCC, but was nonetheless important, was a program in firefighting. While no enrollee left the CCC camp at Big Bend for a job as a firefighter from January 1940 to September 1941, the skills those enrollees gained through fire

²¹ While this is four years prior to the creation of the job as a museum guide, from June 15, 1936 to August 31, 1936 there were 927 visitors to Big Bend National Park, and it was said that the “museum is attracting attention and much interest.” In August a group came to Big Bend from the University of Texas specifically to go to the museum and study geology. At the time, it was the duty of the geological and wildlife technicians to show the tourists around, however, only on Sundays and holidays. Thus, it can be seen that the CCC saw a value in creating a position for enrollees and found the education a necessary component. Numbers compiled from a series of Activity and Use Reports found in 500 (CCC) Publicity & Statistics, National Archives, Denver, CO.

²² Memorandum for the Regional Director, Region III from Ross A. Maxwell, August 15, 1940, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities; Quarterly Report of Enrollee Training by CCC Technical Agencies, December 1940, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities; Quarterly Report of Enrollee Training by CCC Technical Agencies, March 1941, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities; Quarterly Report of Enrollee Training by CCC Technical Agencies, June 1941, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities.

training were invaluable – not only for the success of the camp but the potential safety of the public. Enrollees were instructed in the construction of fire tool boxes, the use of fire tools, fire suppression, and how to teach the public about fire protection and prevention. CCC camps, as they were located in places that were vulnerable to wildfires, became, at times, the first line of defense and fire suppression. As such, the CCC became a vital source for these measures, and it was necessary knowledge for the enrollees. Enrollees received at least fifty-seven hours of instruction (both on- and off-the-job) in fire pre-suppression training from January 1940 to March 1941. While not necessarily impactful in terms of future employment, firefighting was deemed vital by the CCC camp administration to ensure the protection of the park (and the public) from the destructive nature of wildfires. The CCC in an effort to preserve the parks where they worked as well as the projects they completed, deemed firefighting a necessary skill set for the enrollees to know and developed an education program around it.²³

In comparison, truck driving was not a project at the camp, but it nonetheless required extensive training. As will be discussed in more detail in a later chapter, the truck driving course was intensive in terms of knowledge required by enrollees and was based on in-class instruction as well as practical demonstrations and experience. It is understandable as to why the CCC offered truck driving courses to its enrollees. The CCC required truck drivers for the camp to function, yet enrollees were not expected to have driver's licenses. More so, driver education was indeed necessary for enrollees to carry out their jobs, as simple instruction would not be

²³Fire tool box, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities; Use of the double bit axe, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities; Fire Suppression, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities; Giving Fire Protection to the Public, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities; Inspection of Tools, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities; Quarterly Report of Enrollee Training by CCC Technical Agencies, March 1940, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities; Quarterly Report of Enrollee Training by CCC Technical Agencies, September 1940, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities; Quarterly Report of Enrollee Training by CCC Technical Agencies, December 1940, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities; Quarterly Report of Enrollee Training by CCC Technical Agencies, March 1941, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities.

sufficient. These courses not only enabled the success and effective running of the camp, but it additionally gave the enrollees tangible skills that could be later used to find employment.²⁴

Truck driving courses reached a maximum of twenty-one hours of in-class instruction in the first quarter of 1941 and a minimum of seven and a half hours in the first quarter of 1940. The average number of hours of in-class instruction for truck driving each quarter was nearly thirteen hours, with almost eighteen hours on-the-job. The training was time intensive, but for several enrollees, it proved especially useful. At least four enrollees who received the training and/or worked as truck drivers in the camp left the CCC for employment as truck drivers – three of whom at least doubled their monthly salary. Thus, not only was the education that the CCC provided necessary for the completion of their work in the camps, but it worked to fulfill the larger goals of the CCC by helping the enrollees gain permanent employment.²⁵

Re-gravelling the park road, however, was a specific project for Big Bend. It involved a considerable number of enrollees and training was centered on the project itself, rather than on educational fields related to it. The education plan for re-graveling the road instead focused more on construction methods and only provided a basic education for reading plans and preparing the job for others to do at a later point. While not learning engineering techniques in the process, the enrollees still received a valuable education in construction methods – dealing with overburden, back sloping, dynamite, gravel, grading and packing road surfaces, and loading trucks. These useful construction techniques were the focus of both in-class and on-the-job training, providing

²⁴ Truck Driving Course, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities.

²⁵ Quarterly Report of Enrollee Training by CCC Technical Agencies, March 1940, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities; Quarterly Report of Enrollee Training by CCC Technical Agencies, September 1940, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities; Quarterly Report of Enrollee Training by CCC Technical Agencies, December 1940, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities; Quarterly Report of Enrollee Training by CCC Technical Agencies, March 1941, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities; Quarterly Report of Enrollee Training by CCC Technical Agencies, June 1941, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities; Quarterly Report of Enrollee Training by CCC Technical Agencies, September 1941, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities.

enrollees with both education and practical experience.²⁶

The re-graveling of the park road gave the enrollees involved with it valuable training in road construction that could be later used to obtain employment. For example, in the first and third quarter of 1940, twenty and fifteen enrollees received training in road construction and surfacing, respectively. In the first quarter of 1941, another twenty-six enrollees received training as did twenty-two in the fourth quarter, yet their training focused on both drainage and road construction. Comparatively, these numbers are significantly larger than the previously discussed projects – eighty-three enrollees in road construction compared to a maximum of twenty-seven involved in the lineal survey. Additionally, the number of enrollees is not the only significant aspect of the project's education efforts. Not only were more enrollees taught methods of road construction, but several also left the CCC before the expiration of their enrollment to pursue employment elsewhere. In September 1940 two enrollees left the CCC, doubling their monthly salary, to be employed by the state highway department and the county in road construction. It can then be seen that not only was the job completed in Big Bend National Park, but the CCC enrollees gained valuable skills in the process, allowing them to gain employment elsewhere.²⁷

Another project, the construction of a horse trail to Lost Mine Peak, was more complex than the re-graveling of the park road. It focused on both the planning and construction of a trail, rather than just the maintenance of it. The training even went so far as to explain why the trail was created the way it was from multiple perspectives. Trails were drawn in such a way as to minimize their grade (slope) while at the same time ensuring that they passed certain points of

²⁶ Re-gravelling Road– Job 202, February 14, 1940, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities.

²⁷ Report of Enrollee Training by CCC Technical Agencies, March 1940, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities; Quarterly Report of Enrollee Training by CCC Technical Agencies, September 1940, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities; Quarterly Report of Enrollee Training by CCC Technical Agencies, December 1940, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities; Quarterly Report of Enrollee Training by CCC Technical Agencies, March 1941, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities.

scenic interest. Further, engineers had to consider certain lines, landscape architects focused on blending the trail into the surrounding landscape, geologists stressed the protection of geologic features, and wildlife technicians aimed to protect zoological and botanical features of the area. All of this was included in the enrollees' educational training for the project, even though they were not involved in the planning, merely the execution. Enrollees were additionally taught how to clear the trail and the brush surrounding it, excavate the trail, and build walls and drainage for it. Off-the-job, enrollees were taught about the various circumstances of the trail and how to adapt their construction projects to them – for example, when to build a culvert versus a gutter, or how deep to excavate the trail considering the grade of the slope on which it lay. As such, this training was extensive and provided enrollees with a valuable education in trail building and a number of other skills and techniques. While this training was focused on trail building and the specific surroundings on Lost Mine Peak, the knowledge and experience the enrollees gained could feasibly be applied elsewhere on many other construction projects.²⁸

Lost Mine Peak was only one of several trails that the CCC built in Big Bend National Park, thus trail construction was a common topic of instruction. As seen in four quarterly reports for the years 1940 and 1941 a total of forty-eight hours and thirty-seven and a half hours of instruction were given on-the-job and off-the-job, respectively. For each of these quarters, there were at least fifteen enrollees receiving training, with a maximum of twenty-five enrollees. While Lost Mine Peak was only one trail, the knowledge gained by these enrollees could be applied elsewhere. Enrollees could use this knowledge not only in the building of other trails but in the construction of other projects – constructing proper drains and correct methods of clearing brush would be useful skills for road construction and other such projects. More important, these

²⁸ Horse Trails, August 30, 1940, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities.

skills would make enrollees more qualified for employment outside of the CCC. While, unlike road construction, no enrollee obtained a job in trail construction and departed early from the CCC, this is no surprise. Demand for trails was minimal outside of the CCC, yet, this should not diminish the importance of said education. The CCC saw value in educating enrollees for many possible future employment opportunities as well as to ensure the proper execution of projects, and the necessary knowledge required for these projects could be broadly applied in fields like construction. Considering that these trails are still in use, they were well-constructed at the time. Based on these levels of execution, enrollees can be assumed to have learned proper techniques and the valuable skills needed in the process.²⁹

Enrollees also went through training for the construction of cottages in the Basin area of Big Bend. Before the actual construction of the cabins, enrollees learned about the preparation of adobe bricks for use in the cabins. Off-the-job, enrollees learned which dirt to use to make adobe and why, how to prepare the site, how to make adobe molds, and how to make the adobe itself. While on-the-job, enrollees not only applied this knowledge, but they also were then expected to determine how much adobe the cottages would need and to secure the necessary materials. The education that enrollees received may not have focused on certain studies, such as engineering or geology; however, it was essential and centered on the making of adobe bricks that would best complete the cabins in the Basin.³⁰

As the construction of the cabins progressed, the enrollees' training evolved. They were

²⁹ These numbers come from the periods of January to March 1940, July to September 1940, October to December 1940, and January to March 1941. The records for April to June 1940 are missing and trail construction is not a topic of construction following March of 1941. Quarterly Report of Enrollee Training by CCC Technical Agencies, March 1940, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities; Quarterly Report of Enrollee Training by CCC Technical Agencies, September 1940, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities; Quarterly Report of Enrollee Training by CCC Technical Agencies, December 1940, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities; Quarterly Report of Enrollee Training by CCC Technical Agencies, March 1941, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities.

³⁰ Prep. & Trans. Of Mat. 207-1012, May 25, 1940, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities.

still instructed in adobe work, but they gained additional instruction in stone masonry, carpentry, roofing, plumbing, electrical work, painting, and other various skills needed for the project. Off-the-job training centered around safety, the use of tools, and various methods of construction, as well as when and why said techniques should be used. On-the-job training shifted to focus on practical training and topics that needed hands-on instruction, such as the placement of tiles and the mixing of paints. While it can be assumed that enrollees were assigned to specific tasks, they were all instructed regarding the cabins' completion as a whole – not singling out parts of the project for limited groups of enrollees. Thus, the CCC hoped to give its enrollees the broadest education that they could, seeing value in teaching enrollees all aspects of the project. This would not only enable the enrollees to help complete the project (in whatever manner was needed), but it would also help them to gain employment after their time in the CCC.³¹

The construction of these cabins gave a number of enrollees training in various aspects of the project. During the third quarter of 1940 fifty enrollees received specific training in stone masonry and the making of adobe. Following this point, instruction shifted to that of just stone masonry, and in the fourth quarter of 1940, twenty-four enrollees received training as did twenty-two in the first quarter of 1941. During the same period, five enrollees received specific training in carpentry. In the second and third quarters of 1941 instruction became even more generalized, building construction – there were seventy and forty-two enrollees who received training in the second and third quarters, respectively. Due, in part, to this instruction, three enrollees left the CCC to be employed as stone masons elsewhere between July 1940 and December 1941, each of whom more than doubled their salaries.³²

³¹ Overnight Cabins, July 20, 1940, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities.

³² Quarterly Report of Enrollee Training by CCC Technical Agencies, September 1940, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities; Quarterly Report of Enrollee Training by CCC Technical Agencies, December 1940, 840 (CCC)

Other areas of instruction related to jobs in the camp were also offered, and a number of enrollees left the CCC for employment opportunities elsewhere because of their training. Several enrollees who received training in administration and clerical work got jobs outside of the CCC – two became bookkeepers, others became an Army clerk, a gas station attendant, a grocery clerk, an employee for a lumber company, and a CCC subaltern. Two enrollees with training in the quarry received jobs elsewhere, one for a dirt truck construction company and another at Kelly Field. One welder got a job outside of the CCC, as did two blacksmiths, two auto mechanics, and three cooks. Thus, it can be seen that not only were these skills vital for the continual running of the camp, but they proved useful to the enrollees as they sought employment after their time with the CCC.³³

While the full power and impact of CCC education efforts at Big Bend National Park may never be determined, the legacy of these efforts is clearly seen. Not only did enrollees gain the necessary skills to properly execute and complete the projects to which they were assigned, but they were constructed to such a degree that they are still in use and remain in the same form as they were created. The continual use of these projects shows the quality of work that was used to create them, despite the lack of experience of the enrollees. The skills and techniques that the enrollees gained from these projects and the educational training surrounding them could then be used to help them gain employment outside of the CCC. This is proven by the few enrollees who left the CCC before their tenure had expired to pursue jobs based on these skills. It can only be

Educational Activities; Quarterly Report of Enrollee Training by CCC Technical Agencies, March 1941, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities.

³³ Quarterly Report of Enrollee Training by CCC Technical Agencies, March 1940, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities; Quarterly Report of Enrollee Training by CCC Technical Agencies, September 1940, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities; Quarterly Report of Enrollee Training by CCC Technical Agencies, December 1940, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities; Quarterly Report of Enrollee Training by CCC Technical Agencies, March 1941, 840 (CCC) Educational Activities.

assumed that those who left the CCC at the expiration of their employment were able to apply these skills in a similar manner. Lastly, the enrollees were provided with opportunities for more traditional education, which they readily took. The knowledge gained in these classes was perhaps not as immediately applicable as the vocational and technical training received on-the-job, yet it would, for some enrollees, supply them with the education that they previously did not have the opportunity to complete. It can then be seen that the education efforts made by the CCC in Big Bend did meet the overall goals of the CCC – making good, employable American men.

CHAPTER 5

SAFETY TALKS: ACCIDENTS AND ENROLLEES IN BIG BEND

In the construction of Big Bend National Park by Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) enrollees, almost all the work was done exclusively using hand tools. As has been previously discussed, enrollees entered the CCC with little to no experience for the jobs they would be completing. It is of little surprise then that accidents, both minor and major, occurred in the Big Bend CCC camp. It can be seen through an analysis of accidents at Big Bend that, despite the abundance of willing laborers due to the Great Depression, the CCC administration did not view the enrollees as disposable labor. Instead, they valued the enrollees, saw them as individuals, and treated them as integral parts of the CCC. The camp administration at Big Bend expressed these sentiments through the implementation of safety meetings, recommendations, and collective actions. At the same time, the relatively small number of accidents during the CCC's time in Big Bend shows the effectiveness of these policies.

Accidents can be understood as a natural part of manual labor – it is almost impossible to ensure a perfect environment when people are involved. When discussing accidents in the CCC camps, this has to be taken into consideration. There will be no instance of a camp in which no enrollee was ever involved in an accident of any sort. Any study focusing on the number of accidents to determine the effectiveness of a camp will, as a result, run into issues. Instead, this chapter works to understand and analyze the attempts of the CCC camp administration in both minimizing and alleviating accidents. In doing so, this chapter works to show how the CCC viewed enrollees and how enrollees were transformed in the process.

One way to analyze and interpret accidents is through the idea of “normal accidents.” Normal accidents can be defined as incidents that occur because the system within which they

happen is so complex that “multiple and unexpected interactions of failures are inevitable.” It is important to note that *normal* implies integral parts of the system, not a matter of frequency. While traditionally used for high-tech systems like nuclear power plants, chemical plants, air traffic control, nuclear weapons, and others, this idea can be useful in discussions of accidents within the CCC as well.¹

The CCC inevitably used complex systems in the sense that it undertook projects of a large scale. These projects were completed almost exclusively through the use of manual labor, forcing human interaction and ongoing cooperation. While this may not have caused issues in small jobs such as the production of adobe bricks, it certainly would have been a concern when quarrying rocks or building large stone culverts. Within these projects, any tiny mishap could have led to much larger accidents. Yet, these would not have necessarily been the fault of the overseeing administration. For example, how could the CCC ensure that an enrollee would not misstep and lose his footing, causing him to drop a rock or injure his hand in a fall? In this instance, the fault lies in the system rather than with the overarching organization. It is based on this that a discussion of CCC actions concerning normal accidents proves useful.

Rather than scrutinizing the accidents themselves or the situations that led to them, this chapter focuses on the CCC’s reactions to them. These reactions show two key things: how the CCC sought to fix the system in which they occurred, and the inherent value that the CCC placed upon its enrollees. Had the CCC understood these accidents as merely the fault of the enrollees, it is doubtful that they would have expended much time or effort in attempts to better the system. Instead, it can be seen that the CCC saw its enrollees as important parts of the system. Not only were the enrollees valued and not passed over for the next person in line, but they were also seen

¹ Charles Perrow, *Normal Accidents: Living with High-Risk Technologies* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1984), 3-5.

as necessary for the system itself. Enrollees had to remain in the system for it to work; without them, the projects could not be completed. More than that, however, was the belief in natural human error, which the CCC hoped to minimize as best they could.

The CCC used several different administrative forms to track the progress of its camps, as well as any accidents that occurred. C.C.C.-104 forms reported the number and nature of accidents within the camp for each month. Individual accident reports were created for any accident, work-place or vehicular, and included statements from supervisors, witnesses, and medical staff, as well as any other pertinent documentation. Additionally, there were other administrative records that included inspection reports that discussed any safety issues and the measures taken to correct them, as well as education plans for safety programs such as drivers' education. These documents provide the basis for an analysis of the accidents within the Big Bend CCC camp from November 1937 to February 1942.

During this time, there were a total of 59,559 man-days worked – the standard measurement for time by the CCC. Of the aforementioned total, only 120 man-days were lost due to accidents – only 0.2 percent of those worked. Additionally, there was an average of 106 men working each month in the camp (with a minimum of 35 and a maximum of 143 men). Of these men, there were only 35 total accidents, and only 13 caused a loss of work time. Based on these numbers, the average amount of time lost per accident was 9.2 days. While accidents thus might appear as a relatively unimportant aspect of the camp at Big Bend, the response to them by the camp administration shows the value that they placed in their enrollees, and arguably the effectiveness of their efforts to promote safety.²

² These numbers come from a compilation of C.C.C.-104 records found at the National Archives in Denver. CCC Accidents, Records of Region III (Southwest Region), National Archives, Denver, CO.

Table 1: Number of man-days lost due to accidents in Big Bend. These numbers come from a compilation of C.C.C.-104 records found at the National Archives in Denver. CCC Accidents, Records of Region III (Southwest Region), National Archives, Denver, CO.

Month	Year	Average Number of Men Working	Total Man-days worked	Total Man-days lost
November	1937	132	2772	4
December	1937	117	11	0
January	1940	35	770	0
February	1940	66	1320	0
March	1940	137	2890	0
April	1940	118	2596	0
May	1940	143	3146	0
June	1940	136	2720	0
July	1940	132	2907	16
August	1940	140	3239	18
September	1940	130	2600	0
October	1940	107	1465	14
November	1940	142	2696	0
December	1940	128	2575	0
January	1941	112	2469	18
February	1941	125	2496	3
March	1941	122	2549	0
April	1941	85	1879	0
May	1941	110	2320	5
June	1941	97	2031	31
July	1941	86	1902	11
August	1941	107	2251	0
September	1941	95	2005	0
October	1941	68	1573	0
November	1941	76	1375	0
December	1941	58	1288	0
January	1942	98	2161	0
February	1942	78	1553	0

As can be seen, by the accident reports from the camp, the majority of accidents in Big Bend came from handling objects (7) or the use of hand tools (16).³ While the camp administration attributed all the injuries sustained from the use of hand tools to poor judgment, they did not merely pass the blame for these accidents to the enrollees, understanding that it was

³ Numbers for the types of accidents comes from a compilation of C.C.C.-104 records: CCC Accidents; Poor judgment is considered a possible source for accidents when using hand tools. This can be seen on the C.C.C.-104 form itself. The numbers gathered come from: CCC Accidents.

a part of the system instead. The camp administration actively tried to combat these accidents through safety meetings and recommendations. Rather than punishing or correcting individuals, the camp administration tried to fix the system itself – with the system being the enrollees as a whole.

CCC camps underwent monthly inspections conducted by the regional offices. In their reports, inspectors made a note of the current status of safety in the camp. These reports noted when regulations were not met as well as when situations had been remedied. For example, the inspection report in November 1940 noted that while fire extinguishers were not of the approved frost resistant type, the camp had built a magazine for the storage of dynamite based on previous recommendations.⁴ Inspection reports additionally made mention of any safety meeting held in the camp that month – from August 1940 to June 1941 there were at least ten such meetings.⁵ A special meeting was held in June 1941 on “Precautions to prevent accidents in stream crossing, Dangers in lifting heavy stones, and Safety Responsibility of Foremen in Supervisory jobs,” an obvious attempt to curb the occurrence of accidents related to such situations.⁶ It is interesting to note that the meeting focused on the role of foremen in ensuring safety. Foremen were members of the camp administration, not enrollees, so in this being a topic of the meeting, it shows that the administration placed responsibility on themselves.

In another instance, in the report for April 1941, the inspector recommended that “the

⁴ Record of Inspection, November 12, 1940, 204-1 (CCC) By Field Officers, Records of Region III (Southwest Region), National Archives, Denver, CO. Similar situations can be found in the inspection of October 1940 in reference to proper containers for transporting gasoline and in September 1940 for the installation of a railing around the truck grease rack. Respectively, Record of Inspection, October 14-15, 1940, 204-1 (CCC) By Field Officers and Record of Inspection, September 25-27, 1940, 204-1 (CCC) By Field Officers.

⁵ There was one safety meeting in August 1940, two in October 1940, one in December 1940, two in January 1941, two in March 1941, one in May 1941, and an undisclosed number of meetings in June 1941. These numbers come from a compilation of Records of Inspections found in 204-1 (CCC) By Field Officers.

⁶ Record of Inspection, June 18, 1941, 204-1 (CCC) By Field Officers.

picks which are worn too short for efficient use be removed from the stock to be issued to the field.” In doing so, the camp administration took an active role in creating measures to reduce the number of hand tool accidents.⁷ When examining this action from the perspective of the system as a whole, the camp administration was eliminating faulty parts to ensure success. Again, this works to show the enrollees as a necessary part of the system, with the CCC doing all in its power to make sure that the system worked efficiently and safely.

Camp administrators at Big Bend National Park actively took responsibility for accidents as well as the prevention of them. The aforementioned preventative measures and camp reports show the investment of camp administration in their enrollees. An inspection report from January 1941 noted the transfer of a Junior Foreman from one job to another. This created a lapse in leadership and required an enrollee to fill the vacant position for the time being. As a result of the change in leadership, the inspector recommended a reduction in the number of men at that job since “an enrollee cannot be presumed to exercise sufficiently good judgement in case of an accident to be wholly responsible for 30 enrollees.”⁸ Additionally, when camp administration labeled January 1941 as having an “epidemic of accidents,” the blame was attributed to the shortage of supervisory personnel – not the enrollee who was placed in charge of the job due to inadequate supervisory personnel.⁹ Furthermore, in August 1941 when it was noted that there had been seven lost time accidents since January, the inspector demanded “special and thorough attention” to the camp – implying that the camp administration was at fault, not the enrollees.¹⁰ While all supervisory personnel in the camp were required to complete first aid courses to be

⁷ Record of Inspection, April 8, 1941, 204-1 (CCC) By Field Officers.

⁸ Record of Inspection, January 9-10, 1941, 204-1 (CCC) By Field Officers.

⁹ C.C.C.-104, January 1941, CCC Accidents.

¹⁰ Record of Inspection, August 13-14, 1941, 204-1 (CCC) By Field Officers.

prepared to handle accidents, this expectation did not extend to the enrollees. The camp administration placed the safety of their enrollees on themselves and took responsibility for accidents that occurred through the implementation of these measures.¹¹

While in some instances the occurrence of an accident might be placed on the enrollee, as in the case of Catarino Ramirez, the camp administration implemented policies and actions to help make sure that similar accidents did not occur, taking responsibility for the future safety of their enrollees. On May 13, 1941, Ramirez removed his jumper and continued to work, as a result of this he received a first-degree sunburn on his chest, shoulders, neck, and back. Due to the severity of his sunburn, he was taken off work duty for five days. Ramirez was found at fault for his injury since he was instructed by his supervisor to put his jumper back on and enrollees were told to wear the “necessary clothing for protection against sunburn.” Administrators then took the initiative to prevent further such incidents by cautioning the enrollees “in mass safety meetings as to the danger of sunburn.” Camp administration felt that it was important to explain to the enrollees the reasons for their preventative measures, which were apparently effective since there were no further cases of extreme sunburn.¹²

In another instance, Juan Salazar injured his left foot while working in the quarry at Big Bend. Salazar picked up a rock “weighing 35 or 50 pounds” and let it drop on his foot, causing “moderately severe injuries.” While the administration believed Salazar caused the accident through “personal carelessness” by “working alone,” they nonetheless took preventative measures. Due to Salazar, the administration began to institute “weekly company meetings with a general discussion of accident prevention.” These meetings served as additional means to

¹¹ Record of Inspection, June 21-22, 1940, 204-1 (CCC) By Field Officers.

¹² Report of Accident to Enrollee, May 13, 1941, CCC Accidents.

protect the enrollees through preventative education for a wide range of possible accidents that could occur in their various jobs.¹³

Further illustrating these trends are the accidents involving Manuel Armendarez and Eduardo Nunez. Both enrollees were injured at the rock quarry, Armendarez was struck with a loading bar while he was loading rock on a truck and Nunez hurt his hand while moving rocks. Both enrollees were expected to be back to work quickly – a maximum of two days disability – however, the camp administration placed the blame of these accidents on “carelessness on part of injured.” The accident report forms even noted that “No accident is unavoidable.” While placing the blame on the enrollees, the camp administration took the initiative to prevent other avoidable accidents by instituting weekly safety meetings, as they did after Salazar’s accident. While the effectiveness of these meetings can be questioned, since the three accidents involving Salazar, Armendarez, and Nunez all occurred within a three-month period, the intent of the administrators is telling – it was their hope to prevent accidents attributed to personal carelessness through more training, further protecting their enrollees. More so, when a similar accident occurred involving enrollee Timotee Olivas, camp administration gave further instruction to leaders and assistant leaders regarding safety.¹⁴

While camp administrators may not have been able to foresee the circumstances that Enriquez Vazquez endured, their response to his accident showed the value they placed in their enrollees. On July 15, 1940, Vazquez reached for his canteen, placed in the shade of a Spanish dagger cactus. When he did so, one of the spines penetrated Vazquez’s left eye and broke off.

¹³ Report of Accident to Enrollee or Supervisory Personnel, Juan Salazar, February 4, 1937, CCC Accidents.

¹⁴ Report of Accident to Enrollee of Supervisory Personnel, Manuel F. Armendarez, January 6, 1936, General Part III, Records of Region III (Southwest Region), National Archives, Denver, CO.; Report of Accident to Enrollee of Supervisory Personnel, Eduardo Nunez, December 3, 1936, General Part III; Report of Accident to Enrollee of Supervisory Personnel, Timotee Olivas, June 11, 1936, General Part III.

Vazquez was immediately rushed to the closest Station Hospital at Fort Bliss (almost 300 miles away in El Paso). He returned to camp on August 19th, with a loss of 34 work days, fortunately with no loss of sight. However, in September, Vazquez was relocated to El Paso to be fitted for glasses and further close observations. Despite the need for these accommodations, the camp administration at Big Bend sought to keep him employed and found Vazquez work in the District CCC motor pool in El Paso. Even with Vazquez's limitations, the camp administration did not dismiss him and move to the next person waiting for employment with the CCC. Instead, they looked out for Vazquez and found him work elsewhere within the CCC, showing the value that they saw in Vazquez as an individual.¹⁵

In addition to accidents at job sites, there were accidents on the roads to get to them as well. The role of a driver in the CCC camps was described as “naturally a choice assignment” by a student wildlife technician at the Big Bend Camp. As such, there were only a limited number of enrollee drivers. Since drivers were such a coveted position, they had their own set of safety constraints, and there were individual repercussions for accidents where the driver was found to be at fault.¹⁶

Bruce Archer, unfortunately, found himself in a vehicular accident in March 1942. Archer, driving a Chevrolet stake body truck, caused his truck to overturn, roll, and crash into a dry wash (dry creek) trying to miss a rock in the middle of the road. However, it was determined that Archer was to blame due to his “faulty judgement” in pulling to the right onto a loose gravel shoulder, instead of moving to the center of the road to allow the rock to pass under his truck. In response to Archer's accident, the camp administration revoked his driver's permit and placed

¹⁵ Memorandum for the Regional Director, February 1, 1941, CCC Accidents.

¹⁶ Rollin H. Baker, “Life in the Big Bend CCC Camp - Summer 1937,” *The Journal of Big Bend Studies* 7 (January 1995): 99.

him on camp duty until the camp's closure a few days later. While the camp was near its end, the safety of those stationed there reigned supreme, and the camp administration acted accordingly.¹⁷

In another instance, a CCC Dodge dump truck driven by Alberto Alvarado collided with a privately-owned tank trunk after driving around a blind curve. The report found that newly placed gravel contributed to the accident, and Alvarado "made every effort to avoid" the crash "and would have done so had not the CCC truck skidded on loose gravel." However, it was determined that Alvarado was driving the truck "at a speed slightly in excess of that as safe for negotiation a curve of such nature." Camp administrators responded by removing Alvarado from the truck's crew, suspending his driver's license, and placing him on a labor crew. Additionally, the camp administration decided any truck leaving the immediate vicinity of the camp had to be accompanied by a foreman until new enrollees arrived – it was hoped that some of them could be trained as truck drivers. While these measures had the potential to slow progress in the camp, for the time being, the safety of their enrollees and others in the vicinity took precedence.¹⁸

On January 16, 1941, an accident involving three dump trucks occurred on the way to obtain rock from Big Bend's quarry. The driver of the first truck, Clem Jordan, skidded on a "slight roll of loose dirt," causing him to move into the center of the road. At this point, the drivers of the other two trucks, Howard Pike and Jacob Bogman, were following "entirely too close" and collided with each other when they were unable to stop in time. As a result, the camp administration removed Jordan, Pike, and Bogman from their positions as truck drivers, placed them on rock quarry duty, and revoked their licenses.¹⁹ Due to the serious nature of the accident,

¹⁷ Report of: Project Sup't. Elmer Davenport, Investigating officer, March 19, 1942, CCC Accidents.

¹⁸ Statement of Accident Report of: Project Supt. Kirk H. Scott, Investigating officer, March 19, 1941, CCC Accidents.

¹⁹ Report of: Act'g. Project Supt. Elmer Devenport, Investigating Officer, January 16, 1941, CCC Accidents.

however, further measures were recommended. The camp supervisor proposed to the Regional Director that in addition all three drivers should be given “32 hours of extra duty” and confined to camp for a month.²⁰ Camp administrators hoped that this would serve as a lesson for the other truck drivers so that they would be more careful in their duties and avoid additional accidents. While it is unknown if this was enacted by the Big Bend administration, by presenting the option for further discipline, their motives are clear: they wanted to keep their enrollees safe on the job by whatever means they deemed necessary. Additionally, after this accident, it was recommended that there be a “more adequate schooling of drivers in safety requirements” in the camp.²¹

Vehicular accidents were not only confined to the roads; in the case of Elijah Bledsoe, his occurred on the job-site. On July 24, 1940, Bledsoe injured his ankle while operating a grader on the back of a tractor. Bledsoe was using the grader to level the CCC camp’s basketball court when the grader caught on a rock, causing the tractor to tip. In order to avoid “being crushed underneath” the blade of the grader, Bledsoe jumped clear and landed in such a manner that he injured his right ankle. Bledsoe had a simple fracture in his right ankle, and he received both sick and annual leave for a total of 94 days due to his disability. Even though Bledsoe’s injury was significant enough to cause him to not be able to work for three months, the CCC compensated him for his time lost and retained his position at the camp. While Bledsoe was a foreman, and not an enrollee, this shows the value that the CCC administration, as a whole, placed on all of its employees – something that can be seen throughout all levels of the organization.²²

²⁰ Memorandum for the Regional Director, Region III, January 21, 1941, CCC Accidents.

²¹ Record of Inspection, March 3, 1941, 204-1 (CCC) By Field Officers.

²² Memorandum for the Regional Director, Region III, September 16, 1940, (CCC) Compensation for Injuries, Records of Region III (Southwest Region), National Archives, Denver, CO (Context of Accident); Employee’s Notice of Injury and Original Claim for Compensation and Medical Treatment, July 24, 1940, (CCC) Compensation

Although accidents were not a common occurrence in Big Bend National Park, the camp administration did everything within its power that it could to help prevent accidents of all types. The camps held monthly, and at times weekly, safety talks to address common issues. These issues could be standard safety measures issued to every CCC camp, simple reminders of the policies due to recent accidents, or new camp protocols that were to be instituted because of current situations. Additionally, for certain workforces – truck drivers, specifically – there were specialized meetings that reviewed policies and conducted training. These meetings allowed the camp administration at Big Bend to put in place all the regulations necessary to create a safe and efficient work environment. Not only would this allow for the CCC enrollees to complete their work in Big Bend, but it would keep them safe in the process.

In an attempt to curb vehicular accidents before they occurred, the CCC had enrollees complete drivers' education courses at the camp before they could operate vehicles. Enrollees were expected to demonstrate a "fair knowledge" of materials presented in an outline of driving requirements before being placed in the "custody of an experienced driver" for more practical experience before receiving the job of driver. Enrollees were expected to show competence over state and local laws, CCC regulations, truck mechanics (specifically to change a tire and make gas line adjustments), and agency expectations for operating the truck for CCC projects. These expectations for truck drivers were more than what was expected of every-day drivers, thus showing the importance that the CCC placed upon its truck drivers. There were specific sections of enrollee training on the "Responsibility of a driver, for men in truck; for truck itself, and for the appearance of the truck." Additionally, there were also the expectations for drivers to ensure

for Injuries (Quote); Report of Termination of Total or Partial Disability, December 2, 1940, (CCC) Compensation for Injuries (Disability leave).

“safety in handling explosives” as well as within the camp quarry, which included a blowing a warning whistle before blasting. Furthermore, before even being able to participate in the course, the camp superintendent would “personally investigate each applicant desiring to drive trucks, regarding his character, ability and fitness for the job.” It can then be easily seen that the CCC placed a great deal of responsibility in its drivers and did everything on their end to ensure that only the most capable and qualified men were given the positions.²³

While these measures were not infallible, and inevitably people were involved in accidents, the camp administration at Big Bend took responsibility for those who were injured. When an accident occurred and resulted in an enrollee not being able to work for a period of time, the camp administration did not send them home and replace them with a new enrollee. Instead, the camp administration took care of them, found them medical care, and in some cases found them other work or paid compensation for time lost. Despite the possible inconveniences and varied nature of each situation, the camp administration clearly considered each enrollee as a valuable asset that deserved their attention.

The camp administration’s interest in the enrollees did not go unnoticed. W. R. Bowers, an enrollee in the Big Bend camp from 1934 to 1938, owed “much gratitude” to several people he met during his time in the CCC – namely those who went above and beyond to see Bowers as an individual rather than just a means to an end. Marvin Adams, a truck foreman, placed him on his crew of thirty drivers – a coveted position as discussed earlier. Roy Lassiter, the camp mechanic, taught Bowers “mechanics by word and deed,” and earned the nickname “Uncle Roy” due to “the closeness of [their] relationship.” Lastly, camp superintendent Robert D. Morgan,

²³ “Big Bend NP-1-T Truck Driving Course,” 840 (CCC) Educational Activities, Records of Region III (Southwest Region), National Archives, Denver, CO.

was described by Bowers as “a wise, kindly and unselfish man,” and who, after Bowers’ father died, became a “counselor” to him. While Bowers was not involved in any accidents, his experiences show the level of involvement and commitment that the camp administration had towards its enrollees – valuing them as people.²⁴

It cannot be ignored that in some instances, the enrollee was found to be at fault, and the camp administration punished them. However, at no point was an enrollee dismissed from camp due to an accident – at most, they were reassigned to a different work detail. By employing enrollees – even when they were found to be at fault – the camp administration made clear the value that they saw in them as opposed to the next applicant.

These situations, however, were not unique to Big Bend National Park, or even Texas. The CCC, as an organization, treated its enrollees as valued assets, not merely a means to get the job done. Even though a survey of 100,000 CCC enrollees found that “approximately 75 percent of the young men entering the Corps fell below what the Army considered an acceptable weight and were therefore more prone to, or were already suffering from, physical ills,” the CCC still depended upon its enrollees to transform America’s natural landscape.²⁵ This inherently meant that “human labor was central to the mission and daily operation of the CCC.”²⁶ While the focus on personal transformation may have appeared at times to undermine the CCC’s goal of keeping its enrollees safe, the work that the CCC gave its enrollees transformed their bodies from unhealthy boys into men.

Perhaps the use of enrollees who were at the time unskilled and physically not up to par

²⁴ W.R. Bowers, “The CCC, Big Bend, and Me,” *The Journal of Big Bend Studies* 7 (January 1995): 77.

²⁵ Neil M. Maher, “A New Deal Body Politic: Landscape, Labor, and the Civilian Conservation Corps,” *Environmental History* 7 (July 2002): 441.

²⁶ Maher, “A New Deal Body Politic,” 437.

contributed to accident rates, but after several months of working for the CCC enrollees “were more physically fit than the citizenry at large.”²⁷ This can be attributed to two things: the physical labor being performed by the enrollees and the food they ate in the camp. While the physical labor had the opportunity to cause injury to the enrollees through accidents, mainly it worked to transform the enrollees physically. The CCC gained the reputation of physically transforming its enrollees into healthy, physically fit, and strong men.²⁸

The CCC at Big Bend followed this trend of physical transformation in its enrollees. For example, Bowers gained thirty pounds during his stint at the Big Bend camp. He attributed his physical transformation to the “surprisingly good food” made by the cooks, about whom he was “confident” they had been to “cooking school.”²⁹ Food in Big Bend was surprisingly good, and a significant factor in the transformation of the men. Enrollees in Big Bend were served breakfast, dinner, and supper, and offerings varied. Breakfast consisted of milk, coffee, a cereal, protein, and fruit. Dinner and supper could consist of soup and/or a larger protein, various vegetables and sides, and a dessert. Meals also offered items such as lemonade, hot chocolate, pineapple pie, and root beer.³⁰ Thus, the food in Big Bend was both good and plentiful, making it an obvious source for the physical transformation of the enrollees. Food, however, while undoubtedly a reason for Bowers’s transformation, was not the only factor. The physical labor that Bowers, and the other enrollees, performed five days a week contributed as well.

²⁷ Maher, “A New Deal Body Politic,” 444.

²⁸ For an in-depth discussion of ideas of masculinity and physique within and created by the CCC, see Rachel Louise Moran, *Governing Bodies: American Politics and the Modern Physique* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

²⁹ Bowers, “The CCC, Big Bend, and me,” 75.

³⁰ This information is gathered from a compilation of menus found in Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33; Texas DSP-1 Castolon Co. 1855, Camp Inspection Reports, 1933 – 1942, Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps Division of Investigations, National Archives, College Park, MD.

The transformation of the men working at Big Bend National Park shows how the CCC cared about the health of its enrollees as a whole. The CCC worked to physically transform its enrollees, through ample, good quality food and physical labor. While the labor performed by the enrollees had the possibility of causing bodily harm through accidents, the CCC worked hard to minimize such occurrences. In understanding the role of the enrollees as a part of the system, the CCC sought to make the system both efficient and safe – effectively protecting the enrollees. This shows the CCC cared about the health of their enrollees, not only in response to accidents but in all situations. The CCC sought to cure the ills, both financial and physical, of the Great Depression, and it can be seen through the transformation of its enrollees.

While Big Bend was only one of many CCC camps throughout the United States, it provides a good example how the CCC treated its enrollees. The CCC used their enrollees to combat the Great Depression and transform the landscape of the nation. While doing so, the CCC administration also took responsibility for its enrollees, as can be seen through safety policies and meetings as well as its reactions to accidents. In viewing its enrollees as assets, the CCC valued each one individually and did not replace them when it became convenient to do so. Despite the availability of applicants looking for work, camp administrators believed that their enrollees were worthy of the hard work they were doing and made every effort to ensure their continued employment. Their ongoing efforts at promoting safety in the camp were seemingly effective because the incidence of disabling accidents was relatively low, considering the type of work that the enrollees were doing. Thus, it is evident that the CCC regarded its individual enrollees as indispensable rather than a means to an end.

CHAPTER 6

“DIDN’T GIVE A DAMN:” THE TYRANNICAL RULE OF

WALTER SCOGGINS IN BIG BEND

In August 1940, Rae Walker drove with her young daughter Eleanor Linda from their home in Lockhart, Texas to visit her husband, Maurice – a foreman in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Rae and Eleanor Linda had to drive over four hundred miles to reach Maurice’s camp in Big Bend National Park. They planned to drive to the camp, pick up Maurice, and spend a few precious days with him in the town of Marathon, Texas; however, this would not be the case. Along the way, Eleanor Linda became sick, forcing Rae to make a decision – she had only two options, continue to Big Bend or turn around. With no way to contact Maurice, Rae decided to proceed to Big Bend because, at the very least, she knew a doctor would be in the CCC camp.¹

By the time they arrived at the camp, Eleanor Linda’s condition had worsened, and they feared she had appendicitis. As a result, they were forced to stay in the camp overnight because Eleanor Linda would not have been able to make the eighty-mile drive to Marathon. Despite Eleanor Linda’s condition, the commanding officer of the camp, Lieutenant Walter Scoggins, gave the Walkers no other choice than for Rae and Eleanor Linda to sleep outside, providing them with neither shelter nor access to any. Perhaps Scoggins did this not out of the meanness of his heart but in accordance to CCC regulations; however, these sentiments did not extend to the other leaders in the camp. The camp superintendent ensured that Eleanor Linda was given a cot and a meal that night, and the camp physician went out of his way to make her fruit juices and soups – making them himself so that the kitchen workers would not get in trouble for breaking

¹ Letter to Eleanor Roosevelt from Mrs. Maurice Walker, August 12, 1940, Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library, Hyde Park, NY. Hereafter cited as ER Papers.

regulations. Either way, Scoggins's actions made a lasting impression on Rae concerning her experience in the camp, and, not surprisingly, it was not a positive one.²

Little did Scoggins know that his actions would be the start of a chain reaction, eventually resulting in the loss of his job. By 1940, when Rae took her trip to Big Bend, she considered Eleanor Roosevelt a friend – they had been corresponding through letters since 1935 and met on at least one prior occasion. So, when Rae returned home, she penned a letter to the president's wife detailing her experience with Scoggins. Rae wrote that he was “utterly rude & disagreeable” and “not a proper C.O.” She then took her complaints further, stating that she had “it on good authority he's always so – to the N.P.S. men's families, to the boys & to tourists.” Rae maintained that Scoggins had created a hostile environment in Big Bend and quoted him as saying that “he didn't give a damn if he never saw another C.C.C. enrollee.” Rae then told Eleanor that, if she were interested in having Scoggins investigated, she should have it “made on other grounds” than their visit since there were “plenty” of other reasons and “it would be better.” She wrote that everyone in Big Bend “[hesitates] to complain because he is the C.O.” and the isolation of the camp would allow him to become “really tyrannical if he is angered.” She noted that while her trip did not start anything, it certainly “climaxed something which [had] been brewing.” While Rae did not ask Eleanor to start an investigation of Scoggins based on her experience in the camp, by writing to her about the situation, Rae knew that her friend would do something to help ease the situation of those at the Big Bend camp.³

After receiving Rae's letter, Eleanor promptly responded, saying, “I will see what I can

² Letter to Eleanor Roosevelt from Mrs. Maurice Walker, August 12, 1940, ER Papers; Information on camp physician taken from Letter to Eleanor Roosevelt from Mrs. Maurice Walker, August 28, 1940, ER Papers.

³ Letter to Eleanor Roosevelt from Mrs. Maurice Walker, August 12, 1940, ER Papers.

do about the Commanding Officer at the Big Bend Camp.”⁴ She believed that people were “born to be used” and this influenced her in such a way that “she never minded being ‘used’ by those who required help, or support, or simply encouragement.”⁵ She took these ideas to heart in her role as Franklin D. Roosevelt’s wife, the nation’s First Lady, and the “primary ambassador to neighborhood people” for the New Deal.⁶ Thus, it was only natural, as the First Lady and Rae’s friend, for Eleanor to take the matter involving Scoggins directly to the administration of the CCC based on her concern for the common people in the New Deal.

Eleanor’s interest in the betterment of the common person was not hers alone; this idea extended to the New Deal and its programs, including the CCC. This chapter works to delineate the actions of Scoggins, the investigation led by the CCC, and the response of the CCC. In doing so, this chapter shows how the CCC handled situations of this sort and how they viewed their enrollees. As has been discussed, the CCC worked to employ young men, educate them, and prepare them for employment elsewhere. These goals were embedded throughout the organization, as has been seen previously with education and safety. The response of the CCC in reaction to Scoggins works to highlight these efforts further. The CCC viewed and valued its enrollees as individuals, and when an overbearing commanding officer got in the way of their goals the CCC stepped in to alleviate the situation. Additionally, in the national branch of the CCC getting involved, the federal oversight present in the CCC can be determined – more than just with the goals and expectations that they set forth.

In the case of Walter Scoggins, it seems that these ideals, while central to the CCC, were

⁴ Letter to Mrs. Maurice Walker from Eleanor Roosevelt, August 16, 1940, ER Papers.

⁵ Blanche Wiesen Cook, *Eleanor Roosevelt, Volume I: 1844 – 1933* (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), 4.

⁶ Blanche Wiesen Cook, *Eleanor Roosevelt: The Defining Years, Volume II: 1933 – 1938* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999), 1.

not his. It is important to note that Scoggins existed as an exception to the rule, and the CCC's response to his actions shows this. So, while the majority of this chapter discusses a situation that was unusual for the CCC, it is an important aspect of the history of the CCC in Big Bend. Though unusual, the actions of Scoggins show the real experiences of the enrollees in Big Bend – at least for most of 1940. In understanding these experiences, two things can be seen: what situations were cause for concern and how the CCC handled them. In both of these, the CCC showed the inherent value it placed in its enrollees and their betterment.

The CCC relied on many different organizations to ensure a functioning camp – one that provided jobs as well as an enriching experience. The CCC fell under the auspices of technical service agencies (generally, the Department of the Interior and the National Park Service) and the United States Army. Enrollees were dependent upon technical service mandates for all of their conservation and construction projects. The technical service's authority, however, only extended to the work being completed at the camps. The CCC relied on the Army to run and manage the camps themselves. So, while the camp superintendent was a member of the technical services, an army reserve officer held the position of commanding officer. Despite the division of command, CCC camps generally functioned well, because all parties involved kept the enrollee in mind – striving towards both his economic and overall betterment.⁷

The camp commanding officer had the primary responsibility of overseeing all aspects of the CCC camp. This role placed the commanding officer in a position of extreme responsibility. Commanding officers oversaw “[keeping] records, [answering] correspondence with district offices, [controlling] discipline, and [directing] the work of the camp in general.”⁸ While they

⁷ Sidney A. Williams, “The Social and Economic Implications of Education in the Civilian Conservation Corps” (Master's thesis, North Texas State Teachers College, 1940), 18-19.

⁸ Williams, “The Social and Economic Implications of Education in the Civilian Conservation Corps,” 19.

only held direct power over the enrollees when they were in the camp, commanding officers promoted education, good citizenry, and camp morale. Thus, commanding officers played a varied and vital role in CCC camps and were an integral part of an enrollee's experience.⁹

Knowing the importance of the commanding officer, Eleanor immediately wrote to James McEntee, the Director of the CCC, asking him if he knew anything about Scoggins and declaring that she had heard "several complaints" about him and his treatment of enrollees. She wrote, "it seems to me that an investigation should be made," but she also requested that her name not be mentioned, "because he might be able to trace who told me."¹⁰ Not surprisingly, McEntee took the matter seriously and wrote back informing Eleanor that an inspector "directly attached to the Office of the Director" was in route to the Big Bend camp to make an investigation. He then requested that Eleanor provide the names of the people from whom she had heard complaints, ensuring her that "any information furnished him would be treated as confidential."¹¹ Eleanor refused to provide the inspector with the names of her informants, but he had no trouble finding ample people at Big Bend National Park willing to discuss the treatment they were enduring because of Scoggins.

On August 19, 1940, C.H. Kenlan, the Assistant to the Director of the CCC, telegraphed J. C. Reddoch, a special investigator for the CCC, instructing him to go to Big Bend and "investigate alleged mistreatment of enrollees by commanding officer." Kenlan ordered him to "interrogate enrolled personnel without arousing suspicion."¹² To do this, Reddoch was told to

⁹ Melissa Bass, *The Politics of Civics and National Service: Lessons from the Civilian Conservation Corps, VISTA, and AmeriCorps* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2013), 62-63.

¹⁰ Letter to Mr. James McEntee from Eleanor Roosevelt, August 16, 1940, McEntee, James J., ER Papers.

¹¹ Letter to Eleanor Roosevelt from Mr. James McEntee, August 19, 1940, ER Papers.

¹² Telegram to J.C. Reddoch from C.H. Kenlan, August 19, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33, Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps Division of Investigations, Camp Inspection Reports, National Archives, College Park, MD.

“delay notifying CCC headquarters until just before you go into camp” to avoid any unintended interruptions by Scoggins or other parties.¹³ Upon his arrival in the Big Bend camp, Reddoch posted a notice stating that he would be in the Recreation Hall later that evening to “see any enrollee who might care to talk to him” and “listen to any complaint which might be made to him.”¹⁴ Unbeknownst to Reddoch, he would soon be inundated with complaints centered around Scoggins’s abusive nature in general; the extensive and severe scoldings that he doled out to members of the company; his abusive tendencies towards the Mexican-American enrollees; his refusal to switch enrollees from unwanted jobs; and how his actions led to the desertions of enrollees as well as the refusal to re-enroll from members of the company.

Members of the company described Scoggins as “certainly not qualified to lead and train boys,” “somewhat abusive in dealing with enrollees,” and “not [having] the proper attitude towards members of the Company.”¹⁵ Others said that he had “an unkind and unsympathetic attitude towards members of the Company” and that he “doesn’t get along well with others.”¹⁶ While these were only a few of the many statements made concerning Scoggins’s unbearable, insulting, and grating personality, in the end, these negative qualities became the focus of the investigation.

The investigation revealed Scoggins’s tendency to yell at and “bawl out” members of the company. These instances could have been for minor offenses, but, no matter the instigating offense, Scoggins had a habit of yelling for an extended period and losing his professionalism in

¹³ Telegram to J.C. Reddoch from C.H. Kenlan, August 20, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

¹⁴ Notice posted by Robert Conaughty, August 22, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

¹⁵ Statement by Robert B. Conaughty, August 23, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33 (Quote 1); Statement by Elmer Devenport, August 24, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33 (Quote 2); Statement by Roy Lassiter, August 23, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33 (Quote 3).

¹⁶ Statement by Aureliano Alvarado, August 23, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33 (Quote 1); Statement by James T. Carney, August 24, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33 (Quote 2).

the process. Miguel Barrandey noted one instance where he had gone AWOL – though it was only because he could not get back to camp on time after his approved leave. When Scoggins yelled at him for returning late, Barrandey explained that his grandmother was sick, causing his delay. Scoggins, however, did not appreciate his justification and then asked if his “son-of-a-bitch of a mother was also sick.”¹⁷ Additionally, the subaltern (second in command at the camp), Lieutenant Robert B. Conaughty, recalled how Scoggins never explained his duties to him or assisted him in any way. On the rare occasion when Conaughty did ask Scoggins for help, Conaughty said that he “would go into hour long verbal lectures and tongue lashings, not of explanation but stating that I would get ‘his ass into a crack if I continued like that.’”¹⁸ One enrollee stated that he had “talked awfully rough to me,” and another said that he had yelled at him “several times ... over a period of three hours or longer and ... asked me the same question over and over, sometimes fifteen or twenty times.”¹⁹ The First Sergeant believed that Scoggins, a lawyer by profession, used these opportunities to yell at enrollees “for a little legal training.”²⁰

While these instances may have appeared enough to warrant concern, there were two even more severe cases where Scoggins caused two different enrollees to pass out during his sessions of severe reprimands. One of them, Austin Lawson, had been doing his “dead level best to please” Scoggins and the rest of the company in his position as mess steward, preparing the menus ten days in advance and giving them to Scoggins for approval. Yet, on the day the meal was served, if Scoggins was displeased with it, he would call Lawson in and yell about the “menu which he had approved but not read.” While this was not the cause of the scolding that

¹⁷ Statement by Miguel Barrandey, August 23, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

¹⁸ Statement of Robert B. Conaughty, August 23, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

¹⁹ Statement by Robert Eastweek, August 23, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33 (Quote 1); Statement by Leo H. Martinets, August 23, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33 (Quote 2).

²⁰ Statement by Maurice Frederickson, August 23, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

caused Lawson to faint, it did compel him to carry a menu to Scoggins for his approval every day before serving each meal, showing the power that Scoggins held over the enrollees based on fear alone.²¹

The beratement that caused Lawson to pass out came after he had gotten into a fight with another enrollee. After finding out about the incident, Scoggins called Lawson into his office. Scoggins repeatedly asked Lawson the same question and kept him standing for approximately twenty minutes. Lawson recalled that, while Scoggins was in the process of giving him a “third-degree” reprimand, “everything went black before him.” Lawson then “either fell or had to sit down,” and Conaughty took him by the arm and led him to the infirmary. The situation was so severe that Lawson had to stay in the infirmary from Wednesday morning until Friday night.²² On the other hand, the other enrollee who fainted, Arthur Hayes, was an epileptic. The First Sergeant of the company thought that “the fright perhaps brought on the fainting spell.”²³ One junior foreman even claimed that Scoggins “seemed to want to boast” about how “when he put the pressure on them,” the two of them fainted.²⁴

When questioned by special investigator Reddoch later, Scoggins defended his actions leading to the fainting of Hayes and Lawson. He recalled that Lawson had a fever at the time, but he was then unaware of it. Scoggins said that had he known about the fever he would have sent Lawson to the infirmary, presumably without ever having yelled at him. He further claimed he only questioned Lawson for three minutes prior to him passing out – a rather large discrepancy from Lawson’s claim of twenty minutes. Scoggins then stated that Hayes was diagnosed after the

²¹ Statement of Austin Lawson, August 23, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

²² Statement of Austin Lawson, August 23, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

²³ Statement of Maurice Frederickson, August 23, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

²⁴ Statement of Loyd Wade, August 23, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

fact, and had he been aware of Hayes's condition he "would not have questioned [Hayes] at all." When asked about claims of him boasting about making the boys pass out, Scoggins demurred and said he might have said something in a "joking manner." He made sure to remark that this was not intended to be taken as him exhibiting power. These conflicting statements, as it would soon become apparent, were more than a one-time occurrence in the investigation of Scoggins and would turn into an ever-present theme.²⁵

Dr. Albert Malles, the camp physician, noted that Scoggins "continuously and forcefully expressed his hatred of the Spanish-American Enrollees of the Company" and "on numerous occasions discriminated against [them], and held them up to ridicule and insult."²⁶ One enrollee said that he understood some Spanish, especially curse words, and had heard Scoggins "curse Spanish boys in Spanish a number of different times," but that he "never heard him curse any boys in English."²⁷ According to one member of the company, "all the Spanish boys have a feeling of fear and dread about approaching" Scoggins.²⁸

Several Hispanic enrollees recalled specific instances when they had been singled out by Scoggins in a discriminatory manner. Florento Najar stated that Scoggins once told him that if he "could not speak English 'to go to Mexico where you belong you-son-of-a-bitch.'"²⁹ Alberto Juarez discussed when, in a retreat formation one day, he failed to get his arm in the correct position. While the Army ran the CCC camp, the enrollees themselves were not servicemen, so this should have been a minor incident requiring only a simple correction. Despite this, Scoggins

²⁵ Interview of Walter Scoggins by James C. Reddoch, Fort Bliss, August 24, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

²⁶ Statement of Dr. Albert Malles, August 24, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

²⁷ Statement of Leon Pruiett, August 24, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

²⁸ Statement of Juan Estrada, August 23, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

²⁹ Statement of Florento Najar, August 23, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

stormed up to Juarez and began yelling at him, “Can’t you get that arm straight, is it broken?” When Juarez told Scoggins that, no, his arm was not broken, Scoggins replied, “God-dammit get it straight... I am going to load a bunch of you boys up and take you to Mexico.”³⁰ In yet another instance, Scoggins came into the barracks with a pair of hair clippers with one goal in mind. He immediately approached Carlos Jacquez, told him he “looked like a bear,” and forcibly began to cut his hair.³¹ Notably, Scoggins only took actions of this caliber of aggression against enrollees with a Mexican or Spanish background.

In his interview with Reddoch, Scoggins stated that he could speak Spanish and admitted to telling the Mexican-American enrollees that “they should learn English, being that they are citizens of this country and that if they do not want to learn, they should go back to Mexico.” Despite this, he adamantly denied cursing any of the Mexican-American boys, ridiculing them, or saying that he was going to load them up in a truck and take them back to Mexico. In reference to the situation regarding Jacquez, Scoggins repeatedly changed his story during the interview, building his account on a foundation of inconsistencies. The only point that remained consistent was Scoggins’s persistent claim that he did “not cut a hair on [Jacquez’s] head with the clippers.” Throughout the interview, it appeared that Scoggins was aware of the inherent issues in his behavior as he seemingly tried to cover it up. While his efforts were futile, since his account significantly changed multiple times, it does show that Scoggins did understand the fault of his actions and did his best to evade the consequences.³²

Scoggins had been known to threaten the enrollees that he was going to “make them like

³⁰ Statement of Alberto Juarez, August 23, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

³¹ Statement of Carlos Jacquez, August 23, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

³² Interview of Walter Scoggins by James C. Reddoch, Fort Bliss, August 24, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

their jobs, go over the hill, or take a dishonorable discharge.”³³ As such, it was not uncommon for Scoggins to force men to stay in positions they did not want despite their repeated requests for a transfer, showing his refusal to adjust to the needs and wants of his enrollees. For example, Eli Bradford, the latrine orderly, being displeased with his position, asked Scoggins for relief. Bradford even went so far as sending other enrollees, who wanted to be latrine orderlies, to ask Scoggins for the position, yet these efforts were to no avail. It was only after Bradford talked to Conaughty that Scoggins let him out of the job, angrily telling him, “Don’t thank me, thank Lt. Conaughty, I am glad to get rid of you, I don’t like boys like you anyway.”³⁴ In another instance, Daniel R. Hornback had been assigned the role of night watchman. He began asking Scoggins for relief because he had trouble sleeping during the day, making it difficult to do his job. One night, due to his lack of sleep, Hornback fell asleep on the job, and Scoggins jumped at the chance to scold him. Having reliable information that Scoggins would give him a dishonorable discharge if he so much as “put [his] ass on the bed again while [he] was on duty,” Hornback became concerned about his position in the CCC and his livelihood.³⁵ John Nolan, in his position as orderly, became “mighty nervous” in Scoggins’s presence due to previous verbal abuse and became “unable to do [his] work” when Scoggins was around.³⁶ Additionally, enrollees refused to take positions in the mess hall to avoid Scoggins all together.³⁷

In response to these claims, Scoggins justified his actions by stating that his ideology towards the enrollees and their job training was to keep them in their positions until their work

³³ Letter to C.H. Kenlan from J.C. Reddoch, August 28, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

³⁴ Statement of Eli Bradford, August 23, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

³⁵ Statement of Daniel Ralph Hornback, August 24, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

³⁶ Statement of John Jack Nolan, August 23, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

³⁷ Statement of Robert B. Conaughty, August 23, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

was satisfactory. He then stated on multiple occasions that he had never told enrollees to like their jobs or “go over the hill.”³⁸ To refute Scoggins’s account, Reddoch had reliable information from Conaughty. As the second in command at the camp, Conaughty’s statement was significant. Understanding that Scoggins held power over him but feeling an obligation to the enrollees and the CCC, Conaughty told Reddoch the true behaviors of Scoggins. Conaughty claimed that if at any point someone under his supervision made a mistake, Scoggins told him, “eat his ass out or I sure as hell will. I’ll clean that place all out. I’ll run them all over the hill. These bastards haven’t any brains.” Conaughty, despite Scoggins’s claims of never saying things of this nature, noted that he did on at least two occasions. This statement held inherent value for the investigation as a leading officer in the camp clearly pointed out Scoggins’s behaviors, making it difficult for him to refute these claims later.³⁹

Scoggins’s actions did more than just affect individuals; they significantly influenced the camp as a whole. When Reddoch completed his inspection of the camp, he noted that company morale was poor. Reddoch claimed that Scoggins’s “overbearing and unreasonable attitude” was “undoubtedly” the cause of this.⁴⁰ Several members of the company took this sentiment further, stating that Scoggins was the reason that people were leaving the camp – either by desertion or a failure to re-enroll. Aureliano Alvarado believed that the desertions were “directly attributable” to Scoggins and that “a number of boys” were not going to re-enroll for the same reason. In fact, when he asked for a discharge, Scoggins told him “you are just trying to be a chicken-shit clerk” and refused.⁴¹ Another enrollee, Bradford, said that he was “really afraid” of Scoggins and

³⁸ Interview of Walter Scoggins by James C. Reddoch, Fort Bliss, August 24, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

³⁹ Statement of Robert B. Conaughty, August 23, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

⁴⁰ Camp Inspection Report, August 22, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

⁴¹ Statement of Aureliano Alvarado, August 23, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

would be “mighty glad to get a transfer.”⁴² While these were only a few specific instances, such feelings were found throughout the Big Bend camp and were not unsubstantiated.⁴³

The proliferation of these sentiments led to several occasions where enrollees deserted camp, requested a transfer, or refused to re-enroll. Charlie Buntin, for example, knowingly took a dishonorable discharge rather than becoming the mess steward to avoid working in proximity to Scoggins. In the official paperwork for Buntin’s dishonorable discharge, Scoggins justified his actions, placing the blame on Buntin’s refusal to do what was asked of him. Scoggins recalled that he had just recently appointed a new mess steward, Leo Martinets, whom he believed was “not qualified enough to efficiently perform his duties.” Due to Martinets’s seeming lack of competence, Scoggins turned to Buntin for help. Buntin had previously served as a mess steward and as such was more than qualified to help Martinets in his new position. Scoggins hoped that Buntin would “assist the acting Mess Steward all he possibly could,” and Buntin apparently agreed to help Martinets. Yet, Scoggins claimed that Buntin then refused to assist, and he had to come up with a solution. In response, Scoggins did as he thought best and made Buntin mess steward instead – Buntin had already proved his ability to perform the job, as he was previously a successful mess steward, so this appeared reasonable to Scoggins. To Buntin, however, this was far from a solution or even an option as he promptly refused the position and requested a dishonorable discharge instead.⁴⁴

Scoggins, in a letter to Buntin’s father, said that he obliged with Buntin’s request much to

⁴² Statement of Eli Bradford, August 23, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

⁴³ For similar statements of poor morale, see Statement of Maurice Frederickson, August 23, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33; Statement of Albert Rout, August 23, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33; Interview of Lynn Rittman by James Reddoch, August 24, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.; Statement of Maurice Walker, August 23, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

⁴⁴ A-CCC 201 Buntin, Charlie F., April 26, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

his chagrin. Scoggins referenced Buntin's rank of leader, which gave him both higher pay and an indefinite enrollment period, as a reason as to why he valued Buntin. Apparently, this was why Scoggins gave Buntin the benefit of the doubt when he was AWOL for a period of time. Scoggins said that Buntin "could not ask for any fairer treatment," placing himself on a pedestal displaying his humanity and care for his enrollees. It was this humanity and apparent relationship that Scoggins believed he had with Buntin that influenced his actions when Buntin requested a dishonorable discharge. Scoggins, apparently taken aback by Buntin's decision, "told him to go and think it over for awhile before he made up his mind definitely because he was making a mistake." In doing so, and later telling Buntin's father, Scoggins cleared his conscience and believed that he gave Buntin "fair and impartial" treatment.⁴⁵

Unsurprisingly, Scoggins's account seemed to stray from the truth. After finding out about Buntin's dishonorable discharge, Conaughty reached out to Scoggins and said, "I don't feel as if you gave him a fair deal; on the grounds, that; I am sure he never shirked the duties he performed for you." He then asked Scoggins to reconsider and gave Scoggins until the first of the month to change it to an honorable discharge before he would file an appeal himself.⁴⁶ In addition to the vote of confidence by Conaughty, Martinets also vouched for Buntin. Martinets stated that Buntin "did not want to be Mess Steward," but that he said he would "be glad to help ... all that he could." Martinets even added that he "never did tell Lt. Scoggins that Buntin refused to help," and that Buntin had never refused him assistance. He was under the impression that Buntin refused the position of mess steward because of Scoggins's tendency to abuse them. Martinets thought that Buntin's actions were in an effort "to avoid the Company Commander as

⁴⁵ Letter to John Buntin from Walter Scoggins, April 24, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

⁴⁶ Letter to Walter Scoggins from Robert Conaughty, April 22, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

much as possible.”⁴⁷ Lynn Rittman, the educational advisor, quoted Buntin as saying, “I would rather have to leave than again put myself in a job where the Company Commander would again ‘eat my ass out’ every day.”⁴⁸ Similarly, Albert Rout echoed these sentiments, going even further to say that there had been “a number of different Mess Stewards and no one seems to want this job.”⁴⁹ Thus, while Scoggins seemed to be confounded by Buntin’s request, no other member of the company was taken aback by his actions.

Reddoch questioned Scoggins over these apparent inconsistencies, and then went further, using the incident involving Buntin to question Scoggins’s running of the camp. Reddoch asked Scoggins, “Did you ever sense, at the time, that there was something radically wrong in your camp, when a boy would take a dishonorable discharge in preference to serving as mess steward under you?” When Scoggins denied such a feeling, Reddoch pushed the matter further asking, “did you feel that you bettered your camp in any way, when you lost a good cook and gave this boy a dishonorable discharge?” Again, Scoggins replied that he was in the right, basing his assertions on Buntin’s supposed failure to perform his duties. Yet, these discrepancies served to further highlight the inherent issues in Scoggins’s administration of the camp in two significant ways. First, not only did Scoggins’s account of the incident contradict every other account – a well proven trend calling Scoggins’s character into question; and second, it showed the deep-seeded feelings of resentment in the camp towards Scoggins since members were willing to leave the CCC rather than to work with Scoggins – a trend that would soon be further developed through the course of the investigation.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Statement by Leo Martinets, August 24, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

⁴⁸ Interview of Lynn Rittman by James Reddoch, August 24, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

⁴⁹ Statement of Albert Rout, August 23, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

⁵⁰ Interview of Walter Scoggins by James C. Reddoch, Fort Bliss, August 24, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

Two enrollees, Albert Fannin and Claude McKee, exemplified this second trend more than anything. Based on their previous treatment, Fannin and McKee resolved to desert the CCC. They talked their decision over with Superintendent Kirk S. Scott and educational advisor Lynn Rittman, and the two were convinced to reconsider. While they returned to camp, they had gone AWOL for a period of time, which warranted a punishment – and reprimand – from Scoggins. Upon their arrival, Scoggins called them into his office and assigned them extra duties in the kitchen. This alone would not have been an issue, but Scoggins, in his usual fashion, berated Fannin and McKee. As a result, they decided to continue with their original plan and left the camp.⁵¹

Fannin and McKee walked out of the camp, prepared to trek the eighty miles to the nearest town – appropriately named Marathon. Despite their resolve, the two took considerable risk because the outside temperature was, at the warmest, zero degrees Fahrenheit. No matter the situation, these were not ideal conditions, and this was only compounded by the fact that Fannin and McKee lacked overcoats. Rittman firmly believed that “they would have remained in camp and performed their extra duty if it had not been for the fact that they received such excessive bawling outs from Lt. Scoggins.” Presumably, Fannin and McKee only took these drastic and relatively dangerous measures in an attempt to escape Scoggins and his treatment. Had it not have been for the castigation, presumably both Fannin and McKee would have stayed in the camp and taken the punishment meted out to them – preserving both their health and their employment with the CCC.⁵²

Seemingly undisturbed by the weather, Scoggins did not stop Fannin and McKee, nor did

⁵¹ Letter to C.H. Kenlan from James Reddoch, August 28, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

⁵² Letter to C.H. Kenlan from James Reddoch, August 28, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33 (General information); Interview of Lynn Rittman by James C. Reddoch, August 24, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33 (Quote).

he seem to care about their wellbeing. Roy Lassiter noted that after they left, “members of the Technical Personnel became very much concerned about them for fear that they might freeze.” Lassiter also remembered that “everyone thought that the Company Commander should have furnished transportation to Marathon under the circumstances.”⁵³ It was not until the morning after Fannin and McKee left that Scoggins showed signs of caring. Scoggins realized, then, that the two enrollees had been discharged without a physical examination, a requirement according to CCC regulations. Thus, it was out of concern for his job, not the enrollees, that Scoggins considered the health and safety of Fannin and McKee.⁵⁴

Following this realization, Scoggins ordered Captain Crews to take a truck and bring Fannin and McKee back to camp for a physical examination. Crews drove out of camp to meet the enrollees on the road, but Fannin and McKee predictably refused to return to camp with him. When Crews returned to camp without the enrollees, Scoggins told him to “get the difference in the safe,” referring to a forty-five-caliber pistol, and bring them back with the threat of force.⁵⁵ Crews refused to follow his order, and Scoggins was forced to find a new solution. Scoggins then turned to the first sergeant and told him to grab “four good strong boys.” Since Crews refused to use the threat of force, Scoggins decided actual force was the next best option. Thankfully, the first sergeant disagreed with Scoggins’s solution and offered instead to take the ambulance with the camp doctor to meet them and conduct an examination on the road. Surprisingly, Scoggins agreed to the first sergeant’s proposition, and the situation was quickly resolved.⁵⁶ In an apparent exercise of restraint, Scoggins refused to bring back Fannin and McKee himself, because “he

⁵³ Statement of Roy Lassiter, August 23, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

⁵⁴ Letter to C.H. Kenlan from James Reddoch, August 28, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

⁵⁵ Statement of Aureliano Alvarado, August 23, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

⁵⁶ Letter to C.H. Kenlan from James Reddoch, August 28, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

was afraid he might lose his temper and ‘stomp the shit out of them’” if he did.⁵⁷ It thus appeared that at no point did the extreme weather influence Scoggins’s decisions, nor did he waver in having others threaten Fannin and McKee for him. Instead, the only time Scoggins considered the health and safety of his enrollees was when he was concerned that he would physically injure them out of anger – showing a concern more for himself than anything else.

Naturally, the incident involving Fannin and McKee became a focus of Reddoch’s interview with Scoggins. Scoggins denied having ordered them out of the camp that night. He insisted that they left the next morning after eating a hearty breakfast. Even before discharging them, Scoggins recalled having told them to “consider the temperature” since “they would not be furnished transportation.” He then stated that they “refused overcoats” despite it being “real cold” outside. He further denied the accusations of telling Crews to get the “difference” out of the safe and his threats to stomp them. So, while Scoggins’s role in the decision of Fannin and McKee to leave camp was significant, as are his further rebuttals of the apparent truth of the incident, the most appalling aspect of this incident is the lack of concern Scoggins showed for these former enrollees. It is clear that Scoggins saw no issue in the fact that enrollees were willing to take a dishonorable discharge, leaving the camp in extreme weather, to escape his presence. The seeming lack of humanity displayed by Scoggins truly demonstrated his inability to serve in such a position, as he was willing to put the health and safety of these enrollees at risk and failed to take ownership of his actions.⁵⁸

Conaughty, in his statement to Reddoch, expressed his displeasure with his position in the camp and Scoggins’s behavior. Conaughty “[refused] to treat [his] subordinates in any but a

⁵⁷ Statement of Aureliano Alvarado, August 23, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

⁵⁸ Interview of Walter Scoggins by James C. Reddoch, Fort Bliss, August 24, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

just and fair manner.” As such, he did “not care to serve under a Company Commander who [ordered him] to treat enrollees with contempt or unfairly.” He went on to say that he would rather resign than “serve under [Scoggins] any longer.” Conaughty feared that if he stayed, he would “eventually be forced to leave the Service under a cloud of suspicion and unsatisfactory efficiency reports.” Scoggins's actions were too much for Conaughty to handle much longer, and Conaughty was forced to consider the option of him leaving the CCC under his own volition. Even if the position in the CCC was the best job for him, Conaughty decided he would rather leave on his own terms rather than being placed into a situation he did not like, considering his belief that he would be most likely forced out anyways.⁵⁹

Situations like these were what led the former camp physician to transfer from Big Bend and were forcing the current one, Dr. Albert Malles, to ask for a discharge. One enrollee was understandably under the impression that “Lt. Scoggins doesn’t like Doctors very much,” based on the circumstances.⁶⁰ Malles stated that he believed that Scoggins had “been most overbearing and [had] insulted and humiliated the Administrative Personnel and enrollees.” It was his opinion that Scoggins was “at least on the verge of a nervous breakdown” and strongly recommended “a most thorough mental investigation.” Malles, feeling “forced” by the hostile situation created by Scoggins, then requested “terminal leave” from the CCC. Despite his experiences, Malles spoke highly of the CCC, saying that it has “been productive of great value to our nation.” Due to his strong regard for the CCC, Malles felt that “those who do not have high character, ideals, should be discouraged from continuing in its rank.” Clearly, Malles was referencing Scoggins in his latter remark, and he made it apparent that Scoggins should be removed from his position in Big

⁵⁹ Statement of Robert Conaughty, August 23, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

⁶⁰ Statement of Aureliano Alvarado, August 23, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

Bend National Park, if not the CCC. Despite his conviction that Scoggins was the issue, and not the CCC or Big Bend, Malles willingly left the CCC to escape the circumstances which Scoggins created.⁶¹

The previous camp physician, Dr. William Petit, also left the camp on his own accord based on the treatment he had received from Scoggins. Elmer Davenport and several others noted that Dr. Petit was “well liked by the Company but this is not true of Lt. Scoggins.”⁶² It had become the “general gossip around camp” that Scoggins called Petit a “son-of-a-bitch” and “the old fart.”⁶³ Jack Nolan recalled a time where he heard Scoggins yell at Dr. Petit for whittling and said, “After you have finished your whittling there, pick up that God-damned stuff.” While Petit obliged, he later approached Scoggins and told him, “You are going to have to treat me with respect.” Scoggins replied, in his typical manner, “that if he didn’t like it he could get out or go over the hill.” Nolan also credited Scoggins with saying to Dr. Petit, “You old son-of-a-bitch if I were to find you dead on the road from here to Marathon I wouldn’t even pick you up.”⁶⁴ Another enrollee said that Scoggins told Petit, “if he were not so old he would knock him flat on his ass.”⁶⁵ Rittman noted that Petit would have had a “complete nervous breakdown” had he not been transferred. Rittman further discussed how Scoggins “humiliated the Doctor at every opportunity” and “tried in every way possible to get all the Officers and Enrollees in camp to

⁶¹ Statement by Albert Malles, August 24, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

⁶² Statement by Elmer Davenport, August 24, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33. For similar statements regarding Dr. Petit, see Statement of James Carney, August 24, 1940 Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33; Statement of Roy Lassiter, August 23, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33; Interview of Lynn Rittman by James C. Reddoch, August 24, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33; and Aureliano Alvarado, August 23, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

⁶³ Statement by Maurice Frederickson, August 23, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

⁶⁴ Statement of John Jack Nolan, August 23, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

⁶⁵ Statement of Eusebio Rameriez, August 23, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

look upon Dr. Petit as incompetent and inefficient.”⁶⁶ Thus, it came as no surprise that Petit asked for a transfer from an obviously hostile situation.

In his interview with Reddoch, Scoggins claimed that his relations with Petit were unpleasant, “both officially and personally,” and that the company generally disliked him. Scoggins then denied all charges of yelling at Petit, calling him names, or threatening to knock him “over on his ass.” In reference to Malles, Scoggins claimed that they “had some trouble,” because Malles had been attempting to “run the camp himself.” He then claimed that Malles was not liked by the camp and called him “offensive.” While it appeared, from all accounts, that Scoggins did not get along with either doctor, this is where the validity in his statements erodes away. There were no claims from others of Malles attempting to take over the administration of the camp, and there were no other statements made attesting to a disliking of either doctor. The question then became if Scoggins was worth the turning away of doctors who were seemingly well-liked by the entire company (with the exception of Scoggins), and who were capable and good at their jobs. Even more so, these trends that were seen with the camp physicians extended beyond them.⁶⁷

The poor attitude and disregard shown by Scoggins clearly affected all the enrollees and played a significant role in their experience and decisions. As seen earlier, in some cases, this led enrollees to desert or refuse to re-enroll, thus going against the larger goals of the CCC and even the New Deal. Scoggins, in his actions, not only went against CCC efforts to provide enrollees with an enriching experience but by driving enrollees away, he reduced the ability of the CCC to help better their situation. Clearly, the administration valued their enrollees and other members

⁶⁶ Interview of Lynn Rittman by James C. Reddoch, August 24, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

⁶⁷ Interview of Walter Scoggins by James C. Reddoch, Fort Bliss, August 24, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

of the CCC, like the camp physicians, and sought to better their circumstances, considering their actions.

At the conclusion of his investigation and fully aware of the situation in Big Bend National Park, Reddoch wrote to his supervisors in Washington with his recommendations. He advised that not only should Scoggins be “immediately relieved from command” but that Buntin should be given an honorable discharge rather than the dishonorable discharge administered by Scoggins.⁶⁸ Thus, Reddoch both acknowledged and wanted to right the wrongs that had been created by Scoggins. Immediately following his interview with Scoggins, Reddoch conversed with Colonel J. Frank Richmond, an Army officer at Fort Bliss, who indicated that “he would relieve Lieutenant Scoggins from command.” This further demonstrates that Scoggins’s behavior was unwarranted and unsupported since Army personnel were then willing to support the CCC in its actions against Scoggins.⁶⁹

When word reached Washington, Charles H. Kenlan, the Assistant to the Director of the CCC, wrote to Director James McEntee, saying, “it is apparent that the Company Commander is unsuited for CCC duty and should be relieved with prejudice.”⁷⁰ Kenlan then wrote to the War Department that Scoggins was “tempermentally [sic] unsuited to command any CCC Company. He has by a sense of mistaken judgement been responsible for poor morale and desertions which would indicate unsatisfactory administration.” Kenlan went further, writing, “this office realizes the importance of strict discipline in CCC Camps but when any Officer on this duty becomes abusive, arrogant, or tyrannical ... he ceases to be of any value.” Kenlan’s statement clearly

⁶⁸ Letter to C.H. Kenlan from James Reddoch, August 28, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

⁶⁹ Letter to C.H. Kenlan from James Reddoch, August 27, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

⁷⁰ Office Memorandum to the Director from C.H. Kenlan, September 3, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

showed where the CCC administration sat in terms of Scoggins; simply put, he was counter-productive to their overall goals.⁷¹

The CCC, as a New Deal agency, meant to better the lives of young men and help them, and the country, out of the depths of the Great Depression. It is hard to justify how the lives of enrollees were being improved when they were in a camp run by a “tyrannical” commanding officer. Since the CCC tried to provide job training for its enrollees, giving them skills to obtain jobs after their time with the CCC, a commanding officer who consistently threatened enrollees with “like the job, go over the hill, or take a dishonorable discharge” did not fit into the scheme. It would also be difficult maintain that the CCC was helping their enrollees gain experience, job skills, and an income if they refused to re-enroll or even stay at a particular camp because of an overbearing camp commander. Thus, the CCC had no option other than to remove Scoggins from his position, which they did with no hesitation.

Even though Scoggins had tenure with the CCC and had run camps for a considerable amount of time when the CCC found out about his actions, they promptly ended his tenure with the organization. Feasibly, had no complaint been brought to Eleanor Roosevelt (through a personal friend no less) the CCC might never have known about Scoggins’s reign of terror in Big Bend. Scoggins, through his formidable hold on the camp, effectively stifled all complaints until Rae’s visit. Even during the investigation, the first sergeant was so concerned about his job because of Scoggins that he pleaded in his statement to Reddoch, “I don’t want to lose my job because of any testimony that I have given. I am married.”⁷² Even though Scoggins was absent from the camp while the investigation was being conducted into his abuse, this statement shows

⁷¹ Letter to War Department Representative, CCC from C.H. Kenlan, September 5, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

⁷² Statement by Maurice Frederickson, August 23, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

the power Scoggins clearly held over his enrollees. Eleanor even noted in her letter to McEntee that “some of the foremen or less important employees would talk if they were not afraid of losing their jobs.” This stranglehold of fear created by Scoggins explains why no enrollee spoke about his experiences to other CCC administrators, leaving them unaware of what was occurring at Big Bend National Park.⁷³

The CCC administration only became aware of the situation when a visiting wife, who just so happened to consider the First Lady a friend, wrote to her. Eleanor naturally brought the matter to the attention of the director of the CCC. While it is easy to understand why she took such actions, it may seem surprising that it took such initiative for the CCC to become involved, yet this situation is not unheard of. At the CCC camp at Shenandoah National Park, enrollees had received only sandwiches of bread and apple butter for several days. It was only after a hungry enrollee’s parent wrote to their local congressman that the CCC administration launched an investigation.⁷⁴ Thus, it was not unusual for the CCC to be unaware of sub-par conditions in the camps unless the matter was brought to their attention. When regularly scheduled inspections came to the camps, commanding officers were aware and could adjust the circumstances so that all seemed in order. Further, commanding officers who maintained a sense of fear in the camp were able to stifle any complaints before they arose. As such, it is easy to see why it took a letter from Eleanor for the CCC to get involved – not because the CCC did not care, they certainly did considering their prompt action, but because the actual conditions of the camp were hidden from their regular inspections.

Following the investigation, McEntee wrote to Eleanor about what Reddoch discovered

⁷³ Letter to James McEntee from Eleanor Roosevelt, August 21, 1940, Texas NP-1 Formerly SP-33.

⁷⁴ Patrick Clancy, “Conserving the Youth: The Civilian Conservation Corps Experience in the Shenandoah National Park,” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 105 (Autumn 1997): 451.

on his trip to Big Bend. He told her that Reddoch had completed his investigation and had confirmed “the charge that the company commander is overbearing and unreasonable in dealing with enrollees and Army personnel.” He then wrote that Scoggins was “relieved from duty on August 28th,” a mere twelve days after the First Lady had written him. She hand-wrote her reply on the letter, “I’m so glad I did not write you unnecessarily and give any names.” While Eleanor may never have set foot in Big Bend or interacted with the enrollees or Scoggins, she certainly had an impact on their lives. As the common person’s ambassador for the New Deal, she fought for their fair treatment, even in the seemingly isolated CCC camp at Big Bend National Park.⁷⁵

The interest of Eleanor Roosevelt and the CCC in the enrollees at Big Bend shows the value they placed on them. When enrollees were found to be enduring what might be considered cruel and unusual punishment, the CCC promptly acted and remedied the situation. Again, the case of Scoggins and his tyrannical rule was the exception rather than the norm for the CCC. As a whole, the CCC sought to better the lives of its enrollees, and in removing Scoggins from his position, it achieved that for the enrollees in Big Bend. More so, Scoggins and his actions have done little to define the history and experiences of the CCC in Big Bend, further showing how this situation was an anomaly.

The reaction of the CCC to Scoggins is significant in showing the value that it, and the federal government, placed on enrollees and their experiences. More than just understanding and viewing Scoggins as an exception, the reaction to Scoggins shows the involvement of both the national branch of the CCC and the federal government itself. Eleanor Roosevelt as First Lady, although not an elected position, served as the New Deal’s ambassador to the people. Through

⁷⁵ Letter to Eleanor Roosevelt from James McEntee, August 30, 1940, ER Papers.

her involvement, she showed not only her investment in the success of the CCC and the wellbeing of the enrollees in Big Bend National Park but that of the federal government as well.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION: LEGACIES

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and National Park Service (NPS) surely dreamed of the successes that Big Bend National Park would have. Perhaps supporters would be impressed to hear of its success, yet it is doubtful that they would be surprised. Both touted the promise of the park, as did Texas newspapers, and in time these claims have proved true. While not as popular as Yellowstone and Grand Canyon – which attracted over four and six million visitors in 2017, respectively – Big Bend has certainly grown in popularity since its inception. In 1944 a mere 1,409 visitors traveled to the park to experience its unique scenery and enjoy the projects that the CCC completed. By 2017 that number had grown to 440,276. In its seventy-three years of existence, Big Bend has attracted more than sixteen million visitors, quite the substantial number.¹

Visitors to the park undoubtedly experience the work done by the CCC, though they may be unaware of it. In order to access the Basin, visitors still travel the Green Gulch road built by the CCC. Just as Herbert Maier predicted, all those years ago, Green Gulch remains the “natural entrance to the park.”² Visitors who stay at the Chisos Basin campground, with a total of sixty campsites, unknowingly sleep where the CCC had its camp, and the cabins built to ‘unsustainable’ levels of perfection remain and house visitors to the park. A large part of the visitors’ experiences in Big Bend are the trails. While perhaps not the most accurate nor scholarly of sources, AllTrails, a trail repository with reviewed trails in parks across the nation

¹ Statistics obtained from NPS Stats, National Park Service Visitor Use Statistics, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, accessed February 27, 2019, <https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/>

² Letter to Conrad Wirth from Herbert Maier, February 18, 1934, 601-03.1 (CCC) Applications for Camps, Records of Region III (Southwest Region), National Archives, Denver, CO.

crowd-sourced by a community of over ten million users, ranks some of the CCC trails as the best in Big Bend. Unfortunately for visitors, the Kibbe Springs trail has been unmaintained by the NPS and is no longer in use, yet it serves as a pristine example of CCC construction in the park. The other trails constructed by the CCC, the Lost Mine and Window, rank as the number one and number three best trails in the park according to AllTrails. The South Rim trail, identified in this study as a CCC project, ranks as number two. Although AllTrails describes the South Rim trail as a long loop, starting on the Pinnacles trail, traversing through Boot Canyon, along the South Rim and back into the Basin through Laguna Meadows, it nonetheless includes the CCC-constructed trail. Thus, while perhaps the memory of the CCC perhaps has faded from the park, the enrollees' work certainly still shapes the experiences of visitors to the park today.³

While the CCC was unable to complete all of its proposed plans due to the outbreak of World War II and the shutdown of the agency, these projects were not abandoned. Today, the park contains the Chisos Basin Lodge, which claims the CCC-constructed cabins as a part of its complex. It may be built in the style of the CCC cabins and it certainly does not look like a hacienda, but it does fulfill the original intentions of park planners – providing ample lodging accommodations to the countless tourists who come to the park. Additionally, roads now traverse the park, over three hundred miles of them – paved roads allow access to both Santa Elena and Boquillas Canyons, with high clearance roads traveling along the Rio Grande, to Mariscal Canyon, and the base of the Chisos Mountains. Trails also provide access to multiple points in the Basin and out of it. While trails may not encircle the Chisos Mountains, as was proposed,

³ For information on the rankings of trails, see <https://www.alltrails.com/parks/us/texas/big-bend-national-park>. AllTrails, accessed February 27, 2019, <https://www.alltrails.com/?ref=header>.

more than two hundred miles of trails currently crisscross the park.⁴

Perhaps one of the most convincing examples of the precedent set by the CCC in Big Bend National Park is the story of the museum. The CCC completed construction of a temporary laboratory in the spring of 1936. Since its completion, the building functioned as a museum for the park, including specimens found within its boundaries. During the second iteration of the camp, the museum had become so popular that it warranted the training of several enrollees to serve as curators (as discussed in chapters three and four). The museum building contained a quarters wing, and when the camp was left unoccupied, this was where the park caretaker lived. Custody of the museum fell under the auspices of the CCC while the camp was occupied, and so the CCC was responsible for its care and protection.⁵

On the night of December 26, 1941, at 3:10 A.M, the fire alarm rang to notify the CCC camp that the museum was burning. The night watchman had noticed the fire and, after alerting the camp, returned to the scene and found the flames had already engulfed the building. A few minutes after first seeing the fire, the roof and two of the walls had fallen in.⁶ Enrollees, hearing the alarm, responded promptly to the fire, but there was little to be done other than to protect the other nearby buildings from catching fire.⁷ The fire caused a total loss for the building and all the specimens inside. The regional geologist, Ross A. Maxwell, noted that a few of the larger rock specimens were “only slightly damaged” but that “virtually all [the] fossils, including dinosaur bones, crumble when picked up.” Of the rock specimens that did survive, they showed “but little

⁴ “Big Bend Fact Sheet,” National Park Service, accessed February 27, 2019, <https://www.nps.gov/bibe/learn/management/statistics.htm>.

⁵ Memorandum for Regional Director, Region Three from Raymond Higgins, January 8, 1942, 800 (CCC) Protection, Service to Public & Forestry, Records of Region III (Southwest Region), National Archives, Denver, CO.

⁶ Statement of Manuel Leon, December 29, 1941, 800 (CCC) Protection, Service to Public & Forestry.

⁷ Statement of Lloyd Wade, December 29, 1941, 800 (CCC) Protection, Service to Public & Forestry.

of their original characteristics.” Maxwell estimated a total loss of \$2000 based on the cost of collecting, preserving, and cataloging the specimens alone – he noted that it would be “virtually impossible” to place such a number on the specimens themselves.⁸

Since this was when the CCC was overseeing the museum, it was their responsibility to investigate the fire and determine its cause. Although the latter could not be ascertained with certainty, the field supervisor leading the investigation determined that pack rats caused the fire. He believed that the pack rats most likely brought a ‘non-safety’ match into the building which ignited, causing the entire building to catch fire. It was then his recommendation to “not spend any considerable time or funds gathering scientific specimens or preparing them for exhibit purposes before an adequate and safe storage place is provided or assured.”⁹ Additionally, in response to the fire at Big Bend, recommendations were made for the entirety of Region III to ensure the protection of museum holdings and scientific specimens. It was noted that the lack of proper fireproof construction or storage should not deter interpretive programs for the public; instead, solutions should be found to best accommodate all needs.¹⁰

The CCC never had the opportunity to rebuild the museum at Big Bend, as the camp shortly thereafter shut down, with World War II drawing the attention of the nation elsewhere. Yet, this was not the end for a museum in Big Bend. In 1957, John Wilson, the founder and director of the Vertebrate Paleontology Laboratory at the University of Texas at Austin, worked to establish a unique paleontology exhibit in Big Bend. Unlike the original CCC museum, this

⁸ Statement of Ross A. Maxwell regarding fire which destroyed museum and exhibits at Big Bend, NP-1, Texas, January 5, 1942, 800 (CCC) Protection, Service to Public & Forestry.

⁹ Memorandum for Regional Director, Region Three from Raymond Higgins, January 8, 1942, 800 (CCC) Protection, Service to Public & Forestry.

¹⁰ Memorandum for the Regional Director from Natt M. Dodge, January 14, 1942, 800 (CCC) Protection, Service to Public & Forestry.

exhibit, called the Fossil Bone Exhibit, was a building constructed over the fossil site itself, allowing visitors to experience and see fossils in the rocks where they were found. In the spring of 1990, the Fossil Bone Exhibit, in an effort to make the site more accessible to visitors, was relocated. The exhibit was moved closer to the parking lot, and the fossils, rather than being kept in the original rocks, were replaced with casts. This exhibit remained in operation until the spring of 2016, when construction began on the Fossil Discovery Exhibit.¹¹

The Fossil Discovery Exhibit officially opened on January 14, 2017 and is touted as “the most significant addition to Big Bend National Park’s exhibits in the past 50 years.” Thanks to the Big Bend Conservancy, over \$1.5 million was raised to help bring the exhibit to life.¹² The new Fossil Discovery Exhibit highlights all areas of Big Bend’s fossil record – including the marine, coastal floodplain, inland floodplain, and volcanic highlands environments.¹³ It brings to life these fossils through the use of large bronze skulls of dinosaurs found in the park, as well as through “incredible paleo art murals.”¹⁴ The Fossil Discovery Exhibit now is able to showcase many of the unique scientific discoveries and specimens of Big Bend – one of the original goals of the CCC museum.

The legacies of the CCC may not be readily apparent through the museum in Big Bend National Park because the CCC neither designed nor built it. It did, however, certainly help set a precedent for it by collecting the first specimens, building the original museum, and having its

¹¹ “History of the Fossil Discovery Exhibit,” Big Bend National Park Fossil Discovery Exhibit, accessed March 3, 2019, <https://fossildiscoveryexhibit.com/before-your-visit/history-of-the-site>.

¹² “Grand Opening of Fossil Bone Exhibit,” by Jennette Jurado, December 22, 2016, accessed March 3, 2019, <https://www.nps.gov/bibe/learn/news/grand-opening-of-fossil-bone-exhibit.htm>.

¹³ “Fossil Discovery Exhibit,” Big Bend National Park Fossil Discovery Exhibit, accessed March 3, 2019, <https://fossildiscoveryexhibit.com/fossil-discovery-exhibit>.

¹⁴ “Behind the Scenes,” Big Bend National Park Fossil Discovery Exhibit, accessed March 3, 2019, <https://fossildiscoveryexhibit.com/dig-deeper/behind-the-scenes>.

enrollees serve as guides. So, this may not be an obvious tie, but the modern facility reflects the vision that the CCC had for the park. Perhaps, had the museum not burned down or had World War II not called the nation away, the legacy of the CCC would be more apparent in the museum itself.

The CCC remains one of the most popular New Deal programs. It has had the success of building state park systems across the country and expanding and improving the national park system. Today, millions of people across the United States undoubtedly experience and benefit from the work the CCC enrollees completed. In Big Bend National Park, this is clearly the case. The CCC set a precedent for other programs of a similar nature – VISTA and AmeriCorps.¹⁵ Perhaps most importantly, the CCC is remembered not only for transforming the landscape but pulling the nation out of the Great Depression. More than just putting men to work in state and national parks, the CCC *employed* those men, sending home money to their families, helping to stimulate the economy. Enrollees look back on their time in the CCC fondly, with alumni organizations formed to recount their shared experiences. The CCC was therefore not only successful in its conservation efforts, but in helping to heal the nation from the ills of the Great Depression.

In Big Bend, the CCC built the national park and provided needed employment to its enrollees. As has been shown, the CCC set up plans for the development of the park, did their best to execute these plans, and in the end laid the groundwork for the park today. More so, it provided its enrollees with employment opportunities – both during their time in the CCC and afterward. The CCC helped to educate enrollees, with traditional classroom teaching as well as

¹⁵ Melissa Bass, *The Politics and Civics of National Service: Lessons from the Civilian Conservation Corps, VISTA, and AmeriCorps* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2013).

vocational training. These undoubtedly helped former enrollees to gain employment after their time with the CCC expired, helping to pull the nation out of the Great Depression. Additionally, the CCC cared about the well-being of its enrollees, at all levels of the organization. Safety was a primary concern, even with able and willing participants waiting for the chance to work in the CCC, the camps (and administration) worked to keep their enrollees safe and employed. Rather than being viewed as disposable labor, they were seen as vital assets to the organization. This fact could arguably be one of the reasons for the CCC's popularity today. Even in the case of Walter Scoggins, the combative commanding officer, the CCC supported its enrollees. Rather than this incident serving as a black mark on the record of the CCC, it proved to be an exception to the rule. More important than the actions of Scoggins was the response of the CCC – marking the organization as one concerned about the enrollees. It can then be seen that the experience of the CCC in Big Bend National Park largely aligned with the legacies of the organization as a whole. The CCC built the park, while at the same time bringing its enrollees, and as a result the nation, out of the trying times of the Great Depression.

Today, Big Bend is not only a National Park, but a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and a Globally Important Bird Area. It covers 1,252 square miles of land, making it the fifteenth largest park in the national park system. Big Bend is home to almost 1,300 different plant species, 75 mammals, over 450 birds, 3,600 insects, 56 reptiles, 11 amphibians, and 38 fish. Additionally, it has a collection of nearly 290,000 museum objects and protects 2,340 archeological sites (despite only eight percent of the park having been surveyed – the total number is undoubtedly higher).¹⁶ While not the trails, camping, and other activities one might

¹⁶ “Big Bend Fact Sheet,” National Park Service, accessed February 27, 2019, <https://www.nps.gov/bibe/learn/management/statistics.htm>.

envision when first thinking of a national park, Big Bend has undoubtedly proved itself worthy of the national park distinction. Without the work of the CCC, it is unclear that any of these facts would be true today. Not only did Texas take advantage of the funds and resources available through the CCC to establish the park, but the CCC effectively built the park out of nothing. The CCC, thus, was crucial to the development and creation of Big Bend National Park.

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