

Civilian Conservation Corps

at
Parker Dam State Park



A Few of the Boys of CCC Camp S-118 at Parker Dam.

CCC Camps involved in building this park:

- ◆ **S-73, Tyler**
- ◆ **S-116, Anderson Creek**
- ◆ **S-118, Huntley**

The following is a Parker Dam specific CCC history.

The Parker Dam Project

The work project designated for Company 309, S-73 was to rebuild and repair the pond on the same site as an original splash dam (from the lumbering efforts of the 1870's) that had been run by William Parker. Work was slow with few men and almost no materials. A dam was in place by December, 1933, but the drain gate was not put in place until 1934. It was at this point that William Dague, the head of the state tree nursery (located near the present Moshannon District 9 Forestry Office), became interested in the project going on at Parker Dam. His influence helped obtain the needed manpower in the form of Company 331, C.C.C. Camp S-116, Anderson Creek, PA & Company 1380, Camp S-118, Huntley. The emergency spillway was soon completed and the gate was closed, allowing the recreational lake to form behind it. Water first flowed over the spillway in August of 1935.



This aerial photograph was taken in 1935. Note the numerous pavilions throughout the park and the rows of tiny blue spruces which are not so tiny today.

Work continued through the fall and winter. The construction of 13 cabins began in the winter of 1935 – '36, with a community center planned in the cabin area as well. (Present cabins 10, 11, & 12 were not part of the original plan and were added later in 1937.) The cabins were numbered 1 – 13 in a counterclockwise loop, just the opposite of the numbering today. Example: Cabin # 1 was numbered 13, cabin # 2, was 12, etc. The spring of 1936 held a surprise and setback for the boys ...

The 1936 flood (end of March) damaged the dam at the spillway – water crested the dam and eroded the earthen embankment on the West side of the spillway, allowing the water to breach under the footer of the masonry core of the dam.



1936 flood damage.



Water under the masonry core.

The dam was repaired through the efforts of the men and boys of camps S-116 and S-118 (Camp S-73 was now closed). The official opening of the park was scheduled for summer of 1937, and a beach and bathhouse had yet to be built. Company 5470 (Company 1380 had moved on), camp S-118 had the task of building a swimming beach and a bathhouse that had showers, sand baths, lavatories and foot baths. The swing piers (large L-shaped piers) were also constructed as part of the project. All was ready by 4th of July weekend, 1937 --- the grand opening the Parker Dam State Park.



The GRAND Opening of Parker Dam State Park - 4th of July weekend, 1937.



Spillway on July 2, 1937.

The dam failed sometime later that fall (probably November) of 1937 and the lake drained.



Parker Dam not long after the official opening, 1937.

The decision was made to completely reconstruct the dam and the work began in early 1938. A new spillway was placed adjacent to the old emergency spillway in the form of a 110' weir that took two days to pour. This work was being done by Company 331, S-116 and yet another company out of camp S-118, Company 2340. The emergency spillway was beefed up in 1938 and the overall height of the breast was raised



Pouring the weir - 1938



Pouring the sluice tunnel - 1939

considerably. A new sluice gate was built at the location of the old original spillway in 1939 and rip rap was laid on the breastwork during the summer of the same. Most of the work was completed by October of '39 and the gate was closed to re-fill the lake.



Parker Lake refilling during the winter of 1939 - '40.

By the spring of 1940 the lake was once again ready for visitors. The CCC camps supplied lifeguards for the swimming season – two guards per day. The camps closed shortly after WWII began, but the park continued on, weathering many changes through the years. The character of Parker Dam State Park owes the CCC – nothing built today equals the rugged beauty of what the Civilian Conservation Corps was able to do.



Parker Dam State Park - 1940.

Look for evidence of the efforts of the CCC in our many state parks built by these hard-working men. Plantations of tall red pines growing in straight rows, log cabins built of chestnut, and stonework are the handiwork of our Civilian Conservation Corps. This sturdy legacy lives on.

The CCC Interpretive Center is open to the public Sundays from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. during the summer season. The Center is also available for group tours by appointment by calling Parker Dam State Park at (814) 765-0630, FAX us at 765-0633, e-mail us at parkerdamsp@state.pa.us or write to Parker Dam State Park, 28 Fairview Road, Penfield, PA 15849-9799.

Setting Up Camp

The first order of business in establishing any CCC camp was to build the actual buildings where the men and boys would eat and sleep. The men slept and ate in tents until proper buildings were erected.



Camp S-116's sleeping tents.



The cook tent of S-116.

Once the camp was erected and in order, the designated work projects began in earnest.

The state of Pennsylvania purchased property from the Central Pennsylvania Lumber Company on July 28, 1930, and then purchased an additional property on June 13, 1931. These lands would become Moshannon State Forest, Parker Dam State Park, and S.B. Elliott State Park. With the coming of the CCC Camps to the area in 1933, the stage was set to begin several ambitious projects - building roads, bridges, planting trees, and building recreation areas where the locals could come and enjoy. There were three CCC Camps actively involved in the building of Parker Dam State Park, although not all three were active at the same time. The camp locations were not far from the park - you can still see signs of these camps if you know where to look.

S-73, Tyler, PA was established on May 6, 1933, at the junction of Black Turn (Mud Run) and Tyler Roads. S-73 was located within the present boundaries of Parker Dam State Park. Company 309 was tasked with building a recreational area – Parker Dam State Park. One historic building remains at the site – the Cabin Classroom (a.k.a. Camp Shawnee) as well as the flagpole site. This octagonal-shaped building was constructed of American chestnut logs and served as camp office while the camp was active. Camp S-73 closed in 1935. GPS location: N 41° 12.677' W 78° 30.223'



This is an aerial view of Co. 309 C.C.C.S-73, Tyler. Note the aforementioned camp office building in the upper-right of the photo. The flagpole site (slightly low-center of photo) can be seen as a small white circle and can also be seen in the present day marked with a new flagpole.



A view from west of the flagpole, 1935.

S-116, Anderson Creek - Nursery, PA was established on May 30, 1933, on Crystal Springs Road near Four Mile Road. The primary job of S-116, Company 331 was to work in the State Tree Nursery to produce the needed trees for reforestation of this area of the state. William Dague (ran the nursery) took an interest in the project going on at Parker Dam and soon the men of S-116 were working along with those of S-73, building the dam and other construction projects. This camp was closed in 1941. GPS location: N 41° 08.077' W 78° 30.842'



Aerial View of CCC Camp S-116, Anderson Creek, PA. The small pond in the upper right corner of this photo can still be seen along Crystal Springs Road.

S-118, Huntley, PA was established on June 11, 1933, at the junction of the Caledonia Pike and McGeorge Road. Camp S-118 was initially responsible for building the many roads and bridges throughout the forest to facilitate fire suppression, but also became the main work force in building Parker Dam. They, too, worked on the project beginning in 1934. This camp closed in 1942.

GPS location: N 41° 12.049' W 78° 25.748'



As you travel the many forestry roads in the area be on the lookout for row upon row of evergreen trees, indicating the presence of an old CCC camp. Along McGeorge Road near the site of S-118 is typical of this pattern of planting.

CCC Camps

Camp	Company	Date	Location	Closed
S-73	309	5/6/1933	Tyler	1935
S-116	331	5/30/1933	Anderson Creek	1941
S-118	1380	6/11/1933	Huntley	1942
S-118	5470	10/21/1936	Huntley	1942
S-118	2340	10/13/1937	Huntley	1942
S-116	303 - C	11/15/1941	Anderson Creek	1941

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