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# Education at its corp

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EDUCATION AT ITS CORP: THE CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS AND  
DEMOCRATIC UPLIFT, 1933-1942

An Abstract of a Thesis  
Submitted  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

Steven Michael Pals  
University of Northern Iowa  
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## ABSTRACT

The Great Depression brought about a trial the likes of which the United States had never seen. People from all walks of life found themselves out of work, money, and hope. The depression effected all peoples but each group differently. The working class underwent deeper hardships than most. The New Deal was the brainchild of President Franklin Roosevelt designed to assist the country in getting out of the Great Depression. The New Deal programs included a number of public works programs, which created jobs for the unemployed, including the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). The CCC was designed to employ unemployed working class young men. Historians have argued that this particular program had two main goals: first, to provide jobs for unemployed young men; and second, to conserve the nation's natural resources. This study focuses on a third important goal that scholars have largely overlooked: education. The CCC established a comprehensive educational program that included a broad range of vocational and academic coursework, as well as classes and training in manners, morals and citizenship. This broad focus suggests that the goal of the CCC was not just about employing working-class youth and giving them some job training to help them obtain permanent jobs in the future. The educational programs encouraged academic study at the high school and college level, much of the vocational training was for white collar employment. The training in manners and morals taught the men of the CCC to speak and act in ways that were identified with middle class culture. All of this suggests that the educational programs of the CCC were geared toward turning these young working class men into members of the middle class. They suggest that the CCC was about more

than unemployment relief, it was also about democratic uplift: an attempt to expand the American middle class. This thesis will utilize primary sources in three regionally different CCC camps: Company 1370 from Virginia, Company 1708 from Arkansas, and Company 2732 from Nebraska. The camp newspapers will provide the day to day information in each camp on the types and promotions of the different aspects of the education program.

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This Study by: Steven Pals

Entitled: EDUCATION AT ITS CORP: THE CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS  
AND DEMOCRATIC UPLIFT, 1933-1942

has been approved as meeting the thesis requirement for the

Degree of Master of Arts

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION .....	1
CHAPTER 1. ACADEMIC TRAINING.....	15
CHAPTER 2. VOCATIONAL AND JOB TRAINING .....	39
CHAPTER 3. LOVE, CITIZENSHIP, AND GOOD HABITS.....	63
CHAPTER 4. FIRST AID AND MILITARY PREPAREDNESS .....	88
CONCLUSION. ....	104
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	108

## INTRODUCTION

Back in 1997 the Shenandoah National Park had a reunion for members for the former Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Those in attendance were the men who participated in the surrounding camps in the Virginia and Pennsylvania area. Among these men was Arthur Emory. While at the anniversary reunion, many of the men participated in an oral history project, with the intention of capturing the experiences of the day. One of the most important questions was, what did they take from that experiences? Emory found one aspect in particular of great importance,

I learned more in there then I ever learned before. You could learn anything you wanted. All you had to do was request a book on something, and they'd get it for you. They had a little library and [I] remember like half a dozen different class, or subjects. And like the guy who was telling you about learning to write his own name. Where else could you do that at middle life?<sup>1</sup>

The experience Emory described was shared by many CCC members. The ability to learn what they wanted allowed many to become what they wanted. A sense of democratic mobility was available to anyone who wanted to take the time to learn. It was to that end that the CCC enabled the youths by providing the tools and skills to create a future of their choice.

This thesis examines the variety of educational programs and experiences offered to the men of the CCC and explores the meaning of these programs. Overall the

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<sup>1</sup> Shenandoah National Park, Oral History, Arthur Emory, James Gecoma, Petro Kulynych, Lawrence McGlynn, and Stanley Rozmus. Interviewer: Kenneth Steeber. 1997. Luray, Virginia

programs suggest an attempt to train working class young men in the knowledge, skills and culture of the middle class. Historians have examined the CCC's educational program and agreed that the youth of the CCC found many benefits from the education and vocational courses for future work. One historian attributed the education courses to environmental awareness. The education program went beyond the purely vocational. The CCC education program focused on topics that suggested they were trying to provide working class young men the ability for democratic uplift toward a middle class lifestyle. The program worked toward their goal through extensive academic programs, college courses, citizenship training, and professional job training. The program was implemented regionally in their own unique way. A dissection of three geographically different regions allow for a study into the CCC's education program in relation to rural and more urban locations. Each region focused on different aspects of their local economic circumstances. Three camps were used; one was from Virginia, one from Arkansas, and Nebraska.

The Corp stemmed from environmental catalysts in the preceding decades. The Progressive Era witnessed a movement to the cities with a primary focus on progress. The progress Americans sought to achieve came at a cost to the environment. Gifford Pinchot argued during his term as the administrative head of the Forest Bureau that the lumbering of the forests was dramatically depleting a resource that might run out by the 1970s.<sup>2</sup> The Weeks Act in 1911 sought to purchase private lands for national forests and

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<sup>2</sup> Neil M Maher, *Natures New Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) 82

national parks. This area included marginal lands that had been severely damaged by water and wind erosion.<sup>3</sup>

The early decades of the twentieth century also saw great floods and water issues throughout the south and east. The Ohio River damaged large tracts of land and homes in 1907. The Mississippi Valley incurred similar effects in 1927 with some of the worst floods on record only to be followed in 1929 by a severe drought.<sup>4</sup> Aldo Leopold, a prominent wildlife conservationist of the Progressive Era, also fought for the preservation of the forest and streams. Populations of fish and other game were depleting and action was required.<sup>5</sup> The government sought to reduce environmental degradation with such acts as the Reclamation Act of 1902, Public Lands Commission 1903-1905, Inland Waterways Commission 1907, and the National Parks Service in 1916. These legislations produced only a minor impact, but created an opportunity for FDR in 1932 to make a real change.

The Civilian Conservation Corp was a product of the New Deal and the Great Depression. After Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected in 1932, he initiated a government shift with his New Deal program which took effect in March of 1933. Part of that program consisted of the Emergency Conservation Work Program (ECWP), which was the public work entity of focused on conservation, which would rename in 1937 officially

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<sup>3</sup> Donald J. Pisani, "The Many Faces of Conservation: Natural Resources and the American State, 1900-1940) in *Taking Stock: American Government in the Twentieth Century* ed. Morton Keller and R. Shep Melnick, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 130

<sup>4</sup> Pisani, 129

<sup>5</sup> Pisani, 139

to the Civilian Conservation Corps. The ECWP was a branch of the Public Works Administration, with the express purpose of “killing two birds with one stone.”<sup>6</sup>

Other programs existed such as the WPA (Works Progress Administration), PWA (Public Works Administration), and the TVA (Tennessee Valley Authority.) These programs began much like the CCC with simple intentions of getting young men back to work, and some even taught them work skills. The PWA is the first worth mentioning. The PWA was first created in May of 1933 within months of his inauguration. This passed through in a bill that also included the NIRA and NRA. Roosevelt viewed the PWA as his driving force against unemployment. This program was to be the working side of this new legislation, with the NRA being the legislative one.<sup>7</sup> The NRA was the administration Roosevelt created to allocate money to workers programs such as the PWA, WPA, and the CCC. The NIRA was also involved with money allocation. They also helped workers find jobs within the programs themselves.

The PWA was in charge of many works programs. They did projects such as the Lincoln Tunnel, the overseas bridges in Florida, and the Oakland Bay Bridge in California.<sup>8</sup> This program was not just limited to civilian improvements; they also helped build ships for the navy. The PWA built the carriers *USS Yorktown* and *USS Enterprise*. They also built the cruiser *Vincennes*. They also constructed planes, submarines, destroyers, and other weaponry. New barracks were built and updated. Many new

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<sup>6</sup> Franklin Roosevelt, “Fireside Chat May 7, 1933” American Presidency Project, (Accessed January 20, 2012)

<sup>7</sup> David M. Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945* (New York, Oxford University Press: 2005) 151-152

<sup>8</sup> Kennedy, 252

airfields and runways were constructed. One interesting facility was constructed at Langley Field, Virginia. The old air force base had been converted into a test facility with a wind tunnel capable of producing winds of 500 miles per hour. This facility has proved valuable over the years for aeronautics research. The government in total spent over \$800 million on national defense.<sup>9</sup>

The CCC was one of the three major public works programs a part of the New Deal legislation. Administration of the CCC was under the Army and the Park Service. The Army dealt mainly with administration duties as well as camp life issues. The Park Service dealt with the projects undertaken within each camp and the training of the individuals for the project. The CCC also had an Education Department. Under the department each camp would have an educational department which was in charge of developing courses, academic and vocational, while also providing job training.

The education program was not initially an aspect of the CCC program. A formal program came into being by the end of 1933. It faced challenges early on from members of the New Deal government and heads of the CCC program. The CCC was intended to provide employment for unemployed single youths and promote conservation. General MacArthur was a prominently opposed to the institution of such a program. The Army was in charge of the administration of the camps and the conditioning process of the

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<sup>9</sup> United States Public Works Administration, *America Builds: The record of PWA* (Washington, United States Government Printing Office: 1939) 107-108

youths involved.<sup>10</sup> MacArthur felt that an education program would interfere with the administration of the camp. Nevertheless the program became a formal part of the CCC program in November 1933. A majority of the enrollees brought into the program were of the working class, but not bread winners.

To qualify for a chance in the CCC, a man had to initially be between the ages of 18 and 25 and their families were on welfare. Men could qualify for no more than a six month term in the Corp, which would change in later years. Each man was given \$30 as pay, however, \$25 must be sent home to the family and the rest may be used for whatever purposes they desired. Outside of the basic hierarchy of officers in the camp, civilian men were chosen from those enrolled to become officers as well. Almost all of the day to day functions and administration was carried out by civilian officers.<sup>11</sup>

The CCC had a primary focus on education and the primary objectives of their education department reflect that sentiment. Howard Oxley, the Director of Camp Education, laid out the focus of the educational program in five points,

1. Training of all camp and district advisers in more thoroughly and practical methods do doing their work.
2. Development of outlines of instruction in vocational subjects such as agriculture, cooking, forestry, carpentry, automotive mechanics, soil erosion and conservation of natural resources.
3. Providing instruction for all illiterates and for those who desire to continue their high school and college training.

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<sup>10</sup> Calvin Gower, "The Civilian Conservation Corps and American Education: Threat to Local Control?" 60

<sup>11</sup> R. Alton Lee, "The Civilian Conservation Corps in Kansas", *Journal of the West* 44, no 4 (fall 2005)

4. Development, after working hours, of constructive, worth-while activities such as arts and crafts, nature study, outdoor clubs, first aid activities, health and physical education, and all forms of athletic recreation activities.

5. Assisting young men in finding jobs by providing instruction in how to make application for jobs, and how to sell their services in person to the prospective employer.<sup>12</sup>

These were the goals of the educational program. Each of the goals was a subset of how the program went about implementing. These goals were also the means by which the youth were to achieve the next level of their economic status.

Historians of the Civilian Conservation Corps have studied a variety of facets of the program, many of which involve the education program. Historians agree that the education program provided positive opportunities for the young men enrolled. Throughout the works on the CCC education has played a vital role in the analysis of the CCC, but they have suggested these programs were largely vocational and technical. Historians of the CCC and the New Deal have agreed that the primary focus of the New Deal program was the working class population, specifically the men and bread winners. The men who came from the working class who found themselves involved in the CCC found a sense of purpose and stability in the CCC. With an unemployment rate of twenty-five percent many bounced from job to job to scrape by. The CCC offered the chance to create a new future for themselves and to lift themselves out of their economic hardships. The education programs opportunities were not just vocational or technical. They encouraged young working class men to attend college, and to imagine themselves becoming part of the middle class.

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<sup>12</sup> Howard W. Oxley, "Educational Activities in the CCC Camps", *Junior-Senior High School Clearing House* 10, no 3, (November 1935) 140



The Civilian Conservation Corp created drastic transformation in many physical and economic ways. The youths that were enrolled in the camp underwent these transformations on all fronts. Historian Neil Maher pointed out that a drastic transformation came to the working class young men in their physical appearance. Exposure to nature and hard work in nature changed them from weak and slender men into men of top physical fitness. The change was representative of the goals the CCC. A weak and skinny man was powerless, the nature of their work transformed them into formidable men of experience. Maher undertook the argument that the conservation efforts helped these rural and urban youth to gain what they had lacked in their low economic status, the ability to improve their physic.<sup>13</sup> His argument also runs parallel to the benefits the men received from the educational programs. These men came into the camp illiterate and with few skills. The program helped them improve themselves and create a improved self and the tools to move up the socio-economic ladder.

Social mobility was also a concern among the African-American people. Just as the working class people searched out ways to correct the wrongs done to them, the African American people also had the same concerns but found that they were working from a further disadvantage of racism. Historian Olen Cole Jr. found that the African American people sought to take advantage of the New Deal programs to achieve the same mobility the working class people strived for. The CCC program was at the forefront of the avenues chosen to acquire work and skills necessary to find jobs. Unfortunately for the African American people, only a few camps were ever set up for them and they

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<sup>13</sup> Maher, 77-83.

remained segregated from the plethora of white camps.<sup>14</sup> However Cole's work still rang true to the economic mobility that people found within the CCC. The men were given educational opportunities to learn any skills they chose or even earn degrees to further themselves out of the financially depressed working class. Cole brought forth the idea through the vessel of the African American strife in the depression that the goal of economic mobility was an ever present idea among not only working class but under privileged people such as the African Americans. Those same aspirations were shared by the working class people who were the target of the New Deal programs.

Those of the working class were among those that felt the effects of the depression the hardest. Many had low incomes to work with in the first place, but now working class citizens faced 25% unemployment and those who owned farms faced foreclosure. Working class people felt wronged by the government and by the upper class citizens. The decade before the depression left working class citizens resenting the upper class for creating an even larger gap in the wealth classes. A moral wrong had been done by them. Historian Robert McElvaine mentioned in his work with personal stories from the Great Depression that the working class citizens sought to find any way or anyone to help them right the wrong done to them. McElvaine attributes that mindset to the support lent to Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal. In turn FDR focused his policies toward the working class supporters to help right the moral wrongs done by them

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<sup>14</sup> Olen Cole, *The African-American Experience in the Civilian Conservation Corps*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1999)

in their eyes.<sup>15</sup> The CCC program was a means by which to help the working class regain and further themselves. The education program consistently promoted the moral integrity of the program and also positive traits that would help the working class men create for themselves a uplifted future. The most advantageous of the benefits was the equality presented, at least towards the men enrolled, was democratic accessibility to any course or path they chose.

The working class was defined by exactly their name, work. Those in the working class were primarily focused on their work, not their occupation. People in the working class worked in a job to make a living not because it was their desired occupation. To work in a select occupation was more of a skilled workers or middle class trait. The depression redefined work. Once the markets crashed jobs disappeared from the market in droves. Work that remained was focused on skilled laborers. Historian Steven Gelber studied how that work was defined in relationship to what he titled "hobby work." Gelber saw that working men of the middle class used time outside of work for hobbies. These hobbies still produced products and were not passive. The hobbies described by Gelber were similar to the vocational work implemented through the CCC education programs.<sup>16</sup> The skilled labor force was the desired goal for implementers of the education program. The CCC provided a regimented work schedule with time selected for extracurricular activities, or as Gelber defined them, hobbies.

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<sup>15</sup> Robert McElvaine, *Down and Out in the Great Depression: Letters from the Forgotten Man*, (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2008) 15-17

<sup>16</sup> Steven Gelber, "A Job You Can't Lose: Work and Hobbies in the Great Depression," *Journal of Social History* 24, no 4 (Summer, 1991)

These hobbies were characteristic of the middle class and were encouraged by the CCC to encourage the working class youth toward that goal.

The CCC's attitude toward education was very middle class. The American education system itself was truly a middle class construct. Historian Burton Bledstein discussed the relationship between the professional and what it meant to be middle class. Bledstein's description of the middle class fell into line with the courses and opportunities offered through the CCC. The Corps was relentless with their push for higher education especially at the University level. Bledstein described the secondary education, specifically the University as a middle class phenomenon that differed from the rigid educational structure of Europe, which had long held the standard for education. Just as the CCC was driven by their goal of employing the youth of the camp, that too was a unique middle class trait. Bledstein stated, "Ambitious individuals in America were instrumental in structuring society according to a distinct vision-the vertical one of career."<sup>17</sup> The professional worker was the ideal to which the CCC strived with their education and vocational programming. It was that idea of democratic uplift inherent in the middle class ideology that fueled the Corps ambitions toward democratic uplift of the working class youth.

The relationship between the CCC and the middle class was the catalyst for the education programs. Those who joined the CCC were young working class men who had fallen on hard times. The middle class differed from the working class in education level

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<sup>17</sup> Burton J. Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education in America*, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company Inc, 1976) ix

and work type. Mary McComb studied the effect the Great Depression had on middle class ideology. In the same way as Bledstein, McComb found that the education level made the divide among the middle and working classes. The middle class was driven by the concepts of business concepts much like the professionalism that Bledstein found in his analysis of the middle class people. It was that professional business concept that the CCC wanted to instill into the working class youth.<sup>18</sup> The depression narrowed the economic gap between the working and middle class. It was the lifestyles and the education acquired for professional occupations that would then define the new middle class youth.

The first chapter focuses on the academic aspects of the education program in the CCC. The academic program fell into different categories on the implementations of academic course work. The first method was an initiative to have all enrollees gain a degree of some form. Typically that meant an eighth grade certificate but for others it meant a high school diploma or equivalent. For lack of funds or time most of the men enrolled had only gone so far as seventh grade. Another method used was correspondence programs with local universities. Those who wanted to move further with their educational goals entered into programs whereby they could take college level course in hopes of completing a degree after their stint in the CCC or to earn a certificate in a subject. Finally the library was the last focus where members could use their own initiative to self teach themselves subjects the CCC could not offer. The academic barrier

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<sup>18</sup> Mary McComb, *Great Depression and the Middle Class: Experts, Collegiate youth and Business Ideology, 1929-1941*, (New York: Routledge, 2006)

separated the working and middle class men. This education program was an effort to remove that barrier. The second chapter focuses on the vocational courses and job training as the other half of the educational program. Vocational courses were courses not related to an academic subject and those tied to specific trade work. The implementation of the vocational program was also diverse. First the program offered class courses in different occupational skills. Each camp tailored courses to fit the future necessities of their enrollees. Secondly the program initiated courses on job preparation. These courses followed the subjects of interview preparation and intrapersonal skills. Many of these courses and opportunities were in conjunction with local community businesses. Self education was also a prevalent factor for the job preparation and vocational course work. These vocational courses were to be the foundation for the skilled work market that emerged following the depression. In these courses the young men of America were expected to find the tools necessary to bring themselves out of general labor into skilled and often white-collar work.

The third chapter focuses on the educational and more specifically the class skills gained through the CCC experience not directly tied to the education program. The chapter studied the citizenship, good habits and even the subjects of love. The men of the camps were not only preparing themselves for jobs after the CCC but a new life. The men of the Corps were encouraged to learn “proper” ways to dress, speak to people, keep themselves clean, and find their soul mate. Subjects such as these were required for those who wanted to enter the middle class and become involved citizens.

The last chapter focuses on a form of education that came as national and world developments unfolded. National defense courses and the courses that went to benefit that end were the focus of the chapter. As the nation looked on to Europe and the aggression of Germany the government found a need to be at a heightened level of readiness. The CCC was always under scrutiny for their military ties, but were always reassured that no military training was involved. As the turn of the decade came around 1940 the camps began initiating National Defense programs that were voluntary to the enrollees. A shift began to emerge that signified the end of the class readiness and educational uplift in favor of defense of the nation.

## CHAPTER 1

### ACADEMIC TRAINING

In 1933 under the Roosevelt administration the CCC was created. It was not until later that year that the education program would take root. Gordon Parks was one of the first enrollees in the program and recalled the initial concerns about their work,

Over two million of us eventually joined the Corps. We planted millions of trees, fought the Dutch elm disease, built fishponds, fed wildlife, cleared tremendous areas of beach and camping ground; and forty-seven recruits lost their lives fighting forest fires. We were earning our keep. But when July came the depression still choked the country, and I knew that it would still be around when our time was up in October. There would probably be even less for us to go back to by then.<sup>1</sup>

The sentiment shared by Parks was shared by many when the program began in 1933. For millions of Americans the outlook was bleak. The education program, which was instituted at the end of 1933, was put in place to help make that future after the CCC less bleak and create possibilities. The goals of the academic education suggested it was intended to serve as a resource to help these men to pull themselves out of their poverty into a learned and skilled middle class lifestyle.

The CCC sought to draw on the young male population's drive to help their families or escape endless job hunting. Marketing the Corp as means to earn a wage and train them for what jobs were available in the depressed economy allowed them an opportunity to gather these men together and reintroduce academia as a means to access

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<sup>1</sup> Catherine Reef, *Working In America: An Eyewitness History*, (New York; Facts on File, 2000)  
221



mobility.<sup>2</sup> At the inception of the CCC program, no education programs were implemented; that was not the original intention of the program. Over time the U.S. Forestry Service along with the Department of Labor thought it would be beneficial to instill an educational program in the CCC, mostly vocational and recreational activities, but no formal education. In July 1933, George Zook, U.S. Commissioner of Education, called for a great emphasis on formal education courses, and by November the other administrative branches of the CCC agreed.<sup>3</sup>

The educational programs instituted in the CCC included vocation courses as well as academia. Academic courses were introduced for many reasons, the black and white reason was to allow enrollees to finish eighth grade certificates, achieve high school diplomas or equivalencies, and college prep. The greater goals of the educational system enacted was far more detailed. Charles H. Judd summarized the broader intentions best in his editorial from the Phi Delta Kappan Journal in which he stated:

Whether the fact has been adequately recognized or not, the CCC camps are a part, and a very important part, of the nation's educational program. . . If it is decided that they should be sent to camps, it is clear that they should be followed thither by the best devices which the nation can command for the training that will make them more competent to deal with modern conditions. . . This requirement is especially urgent when it is recalled that the camps were organized by a government which depends on the intelligence of its citizens for its prosperity and even for its continuance.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Richard Reiman, *The New Deal & American Youth: Ideas & Ideals in a Depression Decade*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 46-47

<sup>3</sup> Calvin Gower, "The Civilian Conservation Corps and American Education: Threat to Local Control?," *History of Education Quarterly* 7, no 1 (Spring 1967) 59-60

<sup>4</sup> Charles H. Judd, "Educational Program of CCC Camps", *The Phi Delta Kappan* 17, no 2 (Dec. 1934) 50

Judd provided an important idea concept when it came to academic based education, the nation relied on an educated middle class work force. Those who were enrolled in the camps came from households with no stability in any way, many had to abandon school in order to find any sort of work just to scrape by. Judd understood that a democratic nation cannot be sustained by a class of people who are unable to grasp the government programs and ideas that are presented because they lack basic education. The middle class was the group of Americans who had the basic education and through that education held the power to change their futures. The working class required the academic education to gain access to mobility so as to become active and functioning members of the middle class.

Another prominent figure in the Corp was Howard Oxley, who became the second Director of Camp Education, wrote on the educational activities and their place in the development of the average CCC enrollee. In an the article he published in 1935 Oxley made a statement on what should be done with the free time given enrollees after their work day: "All the various governmental agencies concerned realize that not only must enrollees be fed and clothed and given work to do, but also that in their spare time they must be given a chance to learn about the world in which they live and their proper place in it."<sup>5</sup> Between Oxley and Judd the real purpose behind the CCC education program became clear. The education of the American youth would in turn create an educated and uplifted citizen. That said, the real question remained, how did the camps go about that?

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<sup>5</sup> Oxley, 139

CCC camps had different forms of academic education within their system. The first type was basic course work, usually focused toward a eighth grade certificate or high school diploma. These courses included basic arithmetic, english, literacy, and history. Another aspect of the system were the correspondence courses. These courses were meant to bring in college level teachers to the camp or to allow enrollees a stint of time to attend college courses toward a certain certificate. These courses included similar subjects as the basic courses in the camp, but more advanced. Correspondence courses also included advanced training in the trades as well. Finally the camps allowed for self education. Self education occurred primarily through the library, but the newspaper also offered advantages from time to time. The library always kept a variety of subjects on hand, but tried to focus on books related to trades or continuing study of any sort. These three methods of academic education brought great opportunity for enrollees to advance themselves intellectually and further their climb up the class ladder of America.

The education system that existed in the early 1930s was still in the process of developing itself. As of 1935, about 24 million pupils attended elementary schools but only three quarters of those students went on to finish the eighth grade. The government only required that a completion of the eighth grade or to be at least sixteen years of age as the minimum requirement for all kids. The compulsory age for children to attend school varied by state. Enforcement of the compulsory laws were not well enforced.<sup>6</sup> The number of students that were currently attempting an eighth grade degree sat around one

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<sup>6</sup> Tracy Lynn Steffes, *School, Society, and State: A New Education to Govern Modern America*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2012) 140-150

million, and about 5.6 million working on high school diplomas. Company 1708 of Virginia specifically stated: "The enrollees in CCC camps who have not had the opportunities to get an education may do so now since the camps are offering them school work that they may finish their grade or high school courses. Also those boys who cannot read or write are given an opportunity to do so." The CCC camps afforded working class men to take advantage of their system. These young men included boys just out of adolescence looking find their way in the world. The company from Virginia understood that formal education was lacking in these young men, the numbers themselves showed that a quarter of all students that attend school dropped before eighth grade. Even a skill as simple as literacy afforded these men opportunity for advancement.<sup>7</sup> Implementing the education program was a hard enough task, getting involvement was a whole new issue.

The CCC camps found great enthusiasm, among some, for their academic programs, while others still felt no passion for utilizing them. Company 1370 of Virginia found that to be the case for them. A member of their editorial staff wrote:

One of the most productive features offered to the CCC enrollees is the means of securing an education above the average person by the simple use of a little of his spare time. But it is rather a difficult problem to get him to realize just what this may mean to him in later life and get him to take advantage of these opportunities. Many of the men can neither read or write and yet they absolutely refuse to take any part in the educational program of the camp.<sup>8</sup>

These men were under the desired age that the CCC wanted. These courses were offered to bring these men above the average. Company 1708 showed that their average grade

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<sup>7</sup> "Education," *Echoes of Ozone*, December 1935

<sup>8</sup> "Educational Opportunities," *Lucky 13* January 1936.

completion was 7.96. Which sat close to the national statistics that only three-quarters of children went to complete eighth grade.<sup>9</sup> The New Deal economy that emerged from the depression required that people be informed and educated in order to pull themselves out of the slums into a more prosperous avenue. In other words, the New Deal revolved around the educated middle class to support the government system it created. It was to that goal that the academic program strived.

In an article published in 1935, Howard Oxley spoke to the challenges that would face the education programs. Oxley stated:

Men enrolled in the camps, coming from all parts of the country, not only present varying degrees of previous training but also differing backgrounds and points of view. The educational program, therefore, has had to take all these variations into consideration, ingeniously adapt itself to fit the needs of every youth, and effect the proper means for sharing information.

Each person that came into camp came from a different background and was affected in a different way by the struggles of the depression. The CCC wanted to bring these diverse backgrounds together and afford all of them the same opportunities to advance themselves. Kenneth Holland, Associate Director of the American Youth Commission of the American Council on Education, stated in an article he published the reason these young men found it difficult to engage in academia,

Most of them never before knew what it was to be urged to go to school; what schooling they had was grudged by their communities and even by their parents. They are, for the most part, the products of under-privileged groups in both rural and urban communities.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> "Camp Overheard," *Echoes of Ozone*, January 1936

<sup>10</sup> Kenneth Holland, "Education in CCC and European Camps" *The Phi Delta Kappan* 19, no 9 (May 1937) 360

These were the class of people the Roosevelt administration sought to target with the CCC program. The under-privileged class had grown so immense that the CCC education programs became a means of turning the growing underprivileged working class into a more privileged middle class. Academic programs served the purpose of creating opportunities and respect within the culture of education. A middle class life meant a life with a degree and respect for education. Oxley went on to state that the Roosevelt had issued an executive order to extend the program to 500,000 to "Make the services of the "CCC University of the Woods" available to over half a million youth."<sup>11</sup> Roosevelt wanted to afford the education opportunities to as many young men as possible.

The breakdown of the course structure was simple. About fifty percent of the courses were vocational in nature and the other half was academic. The academic half broke down further with sixteen percent at the elementary level, which included literacy courses, twenty percent were on the high school level, and five percent at the college level. And the remaining courses rotated.<sup>12</sup> The percent breakdown provided a glimpse into the educational level of the youth which entered the camps. The split between high school and eighth grade education was a sign of the drop in education out of necessity. Since the men were between 18-25 most should have finished high school if they went straight through, but the stats showed that a large majority involved in academic courses were not advanced in basic education.

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<sup>11</sup> Oxley, 140, includes both quotations in paragraph.

<sup>12</sup> Oxley, 140

When it came to implementation of the academic portion of the education program, each camp was generally the same. Educational courses, unlike vocational, were never in a state of flux. Typically the same courses were always offered and rotated in a quarterly pattern. Academic education, which was classroom oriented instead of hands-on, required enthusiasm from the educational advisors as well as fellow enrollees to keep interest alive. Advisors in the camps constantly pursued means of fermenting a culture of intellectual growth. Regionally every camp was similar in the types of classes offered. Oxley stated that the structure of the CCC education system unique to the individual,

CCC educational activities are unique that they teach the youth more about the things that are of most interest or importance to them. There is no prescribed curriculum; the program meets the immediate needs and interests of the enrollees. In the "CCC University of the Woods" one group may be studying handicraft and mechanical arts, another pursuing social and economic problems of today.<sup>13</sup>

When looking at camps in a regional context the same statement applied. Each region focused their program entirely different based on where these men were expected to end up. Academic programs were instituted with a more consistent fashion than their vocational counterparts. A look into three diverse regions examined the local advantages the CCC provided the working class enrollees.

Company 1370 of Virginia was consistent with the expectations placed upon its educational programs. One example in April 1936 explained the best way to educate the

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<sup>13</sup> Oxley, 139

youth of the camp and foster a culture of young men eager to learn. An article published in their paper stated:

A determined resolution sometimes gives good results, but in order to help the boys get the desired results, the instructor is expected to first understand what the student likes and work up interest to that end. State some of the improvements in the public so that the boys will feel that they are getting more and better consideration, both from the teacher and the people on the outside who are learning more about the CCC.<sup>14</sup>

The article echoed what Oxley stated; a successful educational program must be tailored to the person. The Virginia company went about encouraging the enrollees involvement by consistently publishing articles on the benefits the courses and keep the men updated to each new improvement. Encouraging men to take a course on trade for a job was far simpler then encouraging a man to educate himself intellectually, but the CCC understood the importance of academic education as a part of a future middle class citizens.

As each quarter progressed so too did enrollment in elementary and high school courses. One such report in April of 1937 was brief but made a solid statement on behalf of the academic program. The article stated, "The elementary and high school subjects under Mrs. Byson and Miss Fitzgerald have had several new members enrolled since the new men came into camp. A fine chance is offered here for the advancement of one's knowledge or for freshening up in some of one's arithmetic or english-- these two fundamentals of "getting along in life."<sup>15</sup> The last part of the article stood out the most. The phrase "getting along in life" was probably common terminology used by the

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<sup>14</sup> "Education," *Lucky 13*, April 1936

<sup>15</sup> "Educational Items," *Lucky 13*, April 1937



enrollees in reference to the academic courses, but educational advisors encouraged more. The phrase hinted at the lack of importance these men placed on subjects such as arithmetic and English; however, the teachers understood the subjects were fundamental in education as well as their future aspirations for the professional labor force.

The same sentiment also appeared again when a prominent member of the company bid them farewell. John Henry Baker was the editor of their newspaper, and in September 1937 he bid his comrades farewell, but not until he passed along his sentiments. He made these comments on the academic program,

Before leaving 1370 I want to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to those who I know have boosted the school work of our camp. I am lacking in diction when it comes to express my feelings, suffice it to say, the cooperation could have been better, many of the less fortunate boys could have improved themselves. I hope that our company will finally disperse of the illiteracy class, but unless those boys that are holding themselves back decide to step ahead. .there will always be young men here in Company 1370 that can't write a good sensible letter home.<sup>16</sup>

Baker tactfully expressed what the education advisors attempted all along, formal academic education served a great service to these young men beyond a diploma. The last line of his statement drove his point home. Literacy had practical applications that entwined everyone in their lives. It created a higher form of communication and certainly set the ground work for all other forms of formal education. Once literacy was achieved, a new level of mobility was available to the youths in the camp, which provided one of the greatest tools for the youth to enter middle class culture.

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<sup>16</sup> John Henry Baker, "Good Bye & Good Luck," *Lucky* 13 September 1937

One window opened by literacy was the ability for self education through the library. Company 1370 attempted to keep the enrollees updated about new books received in the library, other camps were more proactive. However, the company still held the library in high regard as to the resources it provided. In January 1939, an article ran in the newspaper on that very idea,

The camp library is well stocked with numerous books of all types. These range from adventure stories, western, detective, and other fiction books. This does not include the volume upon volume of highly educational books for enrollees who are seeking to improve their intellect and scope of conception in science, mathematics, photography, various trade books, geography, and numerous other subjects to numerous to mention. . . You will find that for sheer pastime and enjoyment as well as the acquirement of knowledge it will be time well spent.<sup>17</sup>

The library was probably the most democratically available source for intellectual stimulation in each camp. Management of pastime or free time was always on the minds of the educational advisors. A library also offered a unique opportunity to advance the intellect of these men as well as to open new worlds through books that had never reached their inner thoughts. Libraries worked well to manage down time, but grasping interest in education courses was a constant challenge.

In February 1939 the company decided to change up curriculum scheduling by offering morning classes. Typically classes were only offered at night because the morning and early afternoon was set aside for their work outside. Winter always presented a unique challenge of keeping the men busy outside with projects as well as find ways to fill the men's downtime with indoor options. The Company Committee on

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<sup>17</sup> "Enrollees Invited to Use Library," *Lucky 13*, January 1939

Education in 1370 found a morning class option opened up new options for those stalled on educational sentiments. An column on the subject stated,

At the suggestion of one of the members, morning classes were started for two days, Tuesdays and Wednesdays. In addition to this innovation for this company, the members of the technical force and the officers made arrangements to take over certain groups. The net result was that the camp took on a very academic atmosphere and the enthusiasm of the committee members spread rapidly abroad.<sup>18</sup>

Morning classes presented a prime example of every option being afforded the young men in the company. Winter brought less outside work and in turn the educational department found another avenue of options for the educationally stalled. Each small step toward building intellectual culture center, in this case Company 1370, was one step closer toward a refined democratically available education system in the CCC. Which ultimately provided the youth means for a middle class lifestyle, the true goal of the education program.

The effort put forward by Company 1370 was a valiant one. The Virginia company consistently tried different avenues to spark interest in academics and foster an intellectual community. Based on information given through their local paper the effort proved successful at supporting the democratic ideal of education. Correspondence courses made a little impression within the company, but in other regions would prove more successful. Company 1708 from Arkansas also held their education department in high regard, but implementation differed slightly.

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<sup>18</sup> "Educational Program Speeds Up," *Lucky 13*, February 1939

Company 1708 was more consistent with their educational emphasis, specifically academic focus. A prime example appeared in their newspaper in December 1935. Three columns were published on the opportunities or benefits given them by their education department. The first article stated, "If you haven't completed your high school courses or wish to take up college work for credit you may do so by taking advantage of the opportunity offered by Extension Department of the University of Arkansas."<sup>19</sup> The article spoke to the correspondence course program offered in many of the CCC camps. These relationships built between the CCC and local universities allowed more opportunities for men to finish high school degrees or further their education through a jump start to college. Another article wrote,

In viewing the CCC from different angles I find that it is a very beneficial organization to all enrollees. It not only aids us at the present time but in the future as well. . . One of the greatest objectives of the CCC is to educate the men. . . Many of the fellows who did not have a chance to go to school before coming into camp are taking advantage of the opportunities offered by taking courses and studying vocational subjects at the same time while on the job.<sup>20</sup>

Together with the correspondence course, the company made a clear statement of their intentions with their education program. Enrollees would be given every opportunity to further themselves, not only for the present, but for the future. These education programs intended to prepare these men for an educated future in every way possible. By creating an atmosphere that encouraged democratic education, the program created the foundation of what would be an adult prepared to work with struggles presented by the country's

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<sup>19</sup> "School Credits to CCC Boys," *Echoes of Ozone*, December 1935

<sup>20</sup> "Advantages of the CCC," *Echoes of Ozone*, December 1935

economic turmoil. That future was in the hands of the new middle class youth in the CCC camps. The company used a variety of tools to help provide for that future.

One of those tools included lectures. The company offered a lectures based around a variety of subjects. One specific example was a lecture in April 1936 when a Mr. Manson from the College of Ozarks was invited to speak. The subject of the lecture was Indian life and covered subjects from their lifestyles to habits. A lecture such like the one Mr. Manson presented brought forth an opportunity for self education.<sup>21</sup> The lecture provided an anthropological study for those unfamiliar with the Native Americans, an education lesson without the classroom. The lecture also filled the time void of what would have been idle time for those youths who chose not to attended courses. A culture of intellect did not just included courses on fundamental educational concepts, it encouraged an expansive scope to any areas of interest. The culture of education inspired the necessary curiosity and intellect necessary for their upward mobility and aspirations for middle class life.

Along with lectures, another education tool was the camp library. Much like in Virginia company, the Arkansas company held their library has one of its greatest education tools. Their local camp newspaper wrote an article in April 1936 which detailed benefits reaped from the resources located in their library. The article said this on proper book or magazine selection, "Choose any book that will give you either knowledge, or that will stir your imagination, or both. If a book does this you are sure to

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<sup>21</sup> "'Indian Life" is Subject of Lectures Talk," *Airs of Ozone*, April 1936

be reading a good one. If a book does not do this, it is not worth reading and you may safely lay it aside."<sup>22</sup> The education department clearly held their library in high regard. They also encouraged enrollees best use of time with reading material should only be with productive material. A young man in pursuit of a higher class of living utilized the library as a self education tool, which in turn furthered the CCC's goals of moving the boys up towards middle class life.

The company was also exceptional at promoting endeavors pursued by enrollees within the educational field. J.E.Gibbs, a foreman in the camp, decided to try his hand at furthering his education in the post secondary world. The newspaper published a brief article on the proposed pursuits of Gibbs at the Teachers College in Springfield, Missouri.

J.E. Gibbs, Senior Foreman, contacted officials of the Springfield Teachers College, Springfield, Missouri, during the Easter weekend. He holds that anyone possessing his mental and physical dimensions should be a success in any line of endeavor. Mr. Gibbs plans to major in mathematics with a few minors in the arts and science.<sup>23</sup>

Gibbs presented a prime example of the social and economic uplift that the CCC sought to achieve. His course choices in the fields of mathematics as well as minors in arts and science showed his efforts to pursue a intellectual middle class lifestyle, and served as a role model for his peers. Only a few short months later three of his fellow enrollees followed Gibbs example and filed with the National Youth Administration for admittance

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<sup>22</sup> "The Magazines We Read," *Airs of Ozone*, April 1936

<sup>23</sup> "Found: Man With Ambition Plans College Career," *Airs of Ozone*, April 1936

to either the University of Arkansas or Arkansas Tech.<sup>24</sup> Gibbs pursuit of a college career also established a role model for the uneducated working class youth toward the ability for their own uplift.

Gibbs provided a great role model to follow and as a role model he also proved that as a male figure he could again become a productive person again. The male identity revolved around the sense of being useful and productive, breadwinners of the family, especially where families were concerned. The CCC fed of the idea of manhood, in the productive sense. The company paper published an article based on a proverb by Solomon that spoke to personal improvement bettering a community,

All around us we see men wasting a lifetime at aimless play, idle dreaming, and thoughtless food getting and never making an effort to change. It never enters their minds that they might be useful human beings, helping another as they help themselves. One the other hand we see a few who spend at least a small portion of their time in study. They establish habits of thought that enables them to make decisions for themselves and others, thus finding themselves in responsible positions. They have been useful to mankind and the world is proud of them.<sup>25</sup>

Just like Oxley stated that the responsibility of educating these men to understand the changing economic times, so too did the article place the importance of education on a generation of youth. It was the responsibility of the youth to improve themselves to benefit their peers and families. The article presented the idea of democratic uplift, to have equal opportunity for people to move up towards middle class.

The Virginia and Arkansas companies had similar academic programs in place. Their education programs reflected the same determination to provide equal academic

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<sup>24</sup> "Make NYA Applications," *Airs of Ozone*, August 1936

<sup>25</sup> "Wise Men Lay Up Knowledge," *Airs of Ozone*, August 1936.

opportunities to the youth enrolled. The final location analyzed was that of Company 2732 of Ravenna, Nebraska. Their academic program existed much the same as their counterparts; however, their courses reflected that the communities were far more rural and heavily agrarian which affected the CCC roles in the young men's future.

The Nebraska company found the use of a library to be a great resource much like the other camps. The library provided the greatest resource for self-teaching, especially when resources allowed only so many classes to be taught at once. Company 2732 was an advocate for reading, an article ran in their camp newspaper encouraging the benefits that books might have on their future,

Do you want to read and study a good book? Now don't get scared at the word study but you'll find the book so helpful you might want to study it. Builders Blueprints: How to read Them by W.S. Lowndes published by International Text Book company will not only interest you but will help you on the job. You need not be an architect to understand this book. Why don't you try it even though you may never design an Empire building.

The youths in the camp probably found the library more intimidating than anything, due to their lack of education. People tended to fear what they did not understand. Many of the subjects were steps higher than the education they had received. The author of the article focused on removing the blindfolds of fear to the opportunities of education . The article checked the realities of the young men's situations but encouraged them on their next step upwards. The article went on to mention the educational resources,

The Educational Department maintains a select book shelf. There are usually one or two good books on this shelf--books that are chosen and selected for their



interesting style and high quality from a literary standpoint. Do you want to read a good book? Come over at your leisure and see what we have.<sup>26</sup>

The company was proud of its literary accomplishments through its library. It not only provided resources for the vocational end, much like the architect article, it also provided a center for all learning. The library was in the habit of collecting books of "interesting style and high quality" for their collections, as stated by the article. A quality book collection allowed those who were illiterate to jump on the right track with literary works capable of expanding their vocabulary and their minds both uniquely middle class traits.

Also along the lines of literature, the Nebraska company tried a new tactic not seen in the other two camps. Almost every month a small article would appear in the camp newspaper that identified one particular book in the library. A short synopsis about the type of information an enrollee could glean from that book was given as to interest a prospective reader. One example, "Many of the boys in camp have been reading "Every Day Problems in Science" by Pieper and Beauchamp. In this book you'll learn things of interest about the earth, weather, climate, Man's food and water supply, habits of health, mechanics, electricity, and some chemistry."<sup>27</sup> The article provided a valuable resource for potential readers. For most just the title of a book was not enough to intrigue interest, and may probably never just sat down to read a book as a hobby. A brief synopsis like the one in the November edition provided a nice enticement for those curious in the ways of science.

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<sup>26</sup> "Want to Read a Good Book?" and "Select A Book Shelf," *The Buffalo Bellow*, July 1936

<sup>27</sup> "Read this Book," *The Buffalo Bellow*, November 1936. The short article appeared in many different issues and typically contained only one book, but on occasion would talk of two.

One of the priorities of the academic branch of the education program was to bring the academic grade level education up to graduation status. For many that meant at least an eighth grade level education, for other it meant a high school diploma or equivalent. Each camp stressed the need to accomplish at least the eighth grade level and have that certificate under their belt. Company 2732 was no different. In an article on the progress of their Elementary education program, significant progress had been achieved.

The article read,

All boys who are taking the elementary subjects are showing unusual progress. For the past two weeks every member of the spelling class has made no grade below 80 percent. It has long been the custom in this company that all boys who do not have an 8th grade education should by all means make up that deficiency while in camp.<sup>28</sup>

The company consistently published articles on the educational progress specifically the fluctuation in grades to prove that these men were indeed gained from the education program. The article also provided a glimpse into the expectations that the company had on education. The article ended by stating that it was a traditionally held that if a man had no eighth grade education they enrolled in classes to achieve that goal. The Corps suggested an education would move them up in the world to new possibilities.

Another giant leap for the academic program came in September 1937 when the program boasted that all members who had not yet received their eighth grade certificates would complete their qualifications that month. The progress of the elementary education program came as a surprise to the education department who did not expect the

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<sup>28</sup> "Students Progressing in Elementary Work," *The Buffalo Bellow*, August 1936

level of academic achievement to be so high. An article that ran in the camp newspaper explained the enrollees' progress,

Every boy in camp who does not have an eighth grade diploma will receive one this spring providing he is willing to apply himself to a little study. Arraignments have been made with the Buffalo County Superintendent, Mr. Bryon Walker, who has consented to let the boys in camp take the diploma examinations in Ravenna this spring. All seven members in camp who have not completed the eighth grade are already studying on the eighth grade subjects.

Arrangements have been made in some cases or in the process of being made in others so all members with one year of high school may finish either by correspondence or work in the camp school, or both, and receive their high school diplomas in the spring.<sup>29</sup>

A couple educational processes are at play in the article. First was the dramatic step to get all members to achieve at least the level of an eighth grade diploma. Not in either of the previous two companies did such an event occur. Company 2732 consistently prided itself in the over achievement of their enrollees in the practice of academic education, but also for their vocational progress. Secondly was the appearance of the correspondence courses. Each of the prior two companies also worked with correspondence to achieve academic and vocational levels above what the camp educational staff could provide. The correspondence in the article spoke to a working relationship with the surrounding community school districts to gain access for their enrollees to complete high school diplomas. The community grew more into the foundation that the education system for the CCC camps sat upon.

A month prior to the education development the company provided information on the availability of time off to pursue higher education. With the widespread emphasis

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<sup>29</sup> "Many Members Try for Diplomas," *The Buffalo Bellow*, September 1937.

on academic based education in Company 2732 they were ready to provide any means to assist. An article in the camp newspaper from the previous May called for a twelve month leave of absence to attend school elsewhere. The article detailed,

According to official regulations members of the corps may secure a leave of absence not to exceed twelve months to attend schools or college. no pay or allowance will be allowed and members must submit written evidence that their application for enrollment has been approved by the institution. The action of company commanders on applications for is final.<sup>30</sup>

The article presented a unique option similar to that of the correspondence course. The difference being that typically a correspondence course was taught at the camp and a teacher was brought in from a local university or trained by university then sent to the camp. The option provided for in the article allowed a leave of absence. Men who took up the opportunity used their time off to pursue a college career or gain a certificate from a college in a trade skill. Other still might have taken the time to go back home and finish their high school diploma in their home school. In any case the CCC showed that it was ready to take any and all measure to ensure democratic availability of progress.

The academic programs provided for these men made a great opportunity for their lives after the CCC. The Great Depression afforded slack to no man, woman, or child and left most absolutely desolate. The young men were forced into any sort of work they could muster, meanwhile they had to leave all aspirations for their future behind. Even though state government required certain levels of education, it was difficult to enforce. Funding was also dependent upon state governments which was not always possible for the unemployed working class people. A lack of confidence drove many to simply leave

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<sup>30</sup> "12 Months leave for Education," *The Buffalo Bellow*, August 1937

behind schooling in favor of what they considered more practical and profitable in order to feed their families. That was the mindset at the onset of Roosevelt's term as President.

Roosevelt presented a solution with the creation of a public works program known as the CCC. The initial purpose of which was to protect the fast degrading nature of the United States, but also put these men to work. One of the greatest benefits, and what would become one of the sole purposes of the program, was that of an education. The CCC provided a program that gave the young men of America the chance to pull themselves out of their depressed and idle state and make something of themselves. Thousands of men heard that call and flooded into the program. The academic branch of the education program provided a chance to increase their intelligence and prepare them for creating the new middle class in the United States.

Implementation of the program came from a national government push to create able bodied citizens that would understand current economic plights of the country and be productive middle class citizens. How that program was administered through the country was an entirely different matter. Each camp provided an education program, but not each one was alike. Depending on geographic location and relative populations surrounding the camps, they were tailored separate. A glance into three different geographic and cultural areas allowed a glimpse into scope of the CCC education program.

Company 1370 from Virginia had an education system that was simple. Their program contained a variety of programs anywhere basic elementary education all the

way up to high school and even correspondence courses with local universities. The education department tried consistently to enroll as many of these men in their academic program so they could achieve their certificates or degrees to enable their democratic mobility. However they also used resources outside the classroom to boost their effort. The company drew crowds to their library where they kept a wealth of books, magazines, and films. The purpose of these resources was to supplement for courses they were unable to offer for lack of resources. The library also contained information that would complement current courses as well. Company 1370 created a well rounded academic program but not as prominent as others.

Further south, Company 1708 from Arkansas found a similar program but with its own unique differences. The major difference between the two was an increase in correspondence work with universities. The company worked hard to connect their enrollees with colleges, especially Nebraska State University to support the an educated middle class lifestyle. There was always a constant urge to make useful citizens out of themselves. Idleness was to be tossed aside and to take every minute of leisure time to put towards a useful endeavor. That sentiment was prevalent in their libraries. Men were encouraged to make choices that progressed their chances for upward mobility. Time wasted reading cartoons or fantasy novels was time lost. A sense of waste was a notion that found its way into every CCC camp. The depression created an ideology that waste triggered in efficiency and loss of productivity. To be productive and professional were aspects of middle class culture.

That sentiment surrounded the education program in the last location, Ravenna, Nebraska. Company 2732 found itself at the forefront of the academic programs of the three camps. At one point the camp achieved in providing either an eighth grade certificate or high school diploma for all their enrollees. They cultivated a strong culture of academics and found that a degree could be worth its weight class uplift. Although the company was not as strong with correspondence work as its company cousins, it made up for in their books. The company consistently advertised a book in their library in hopes that it would have been enough to spark interest. The library was the prevailing thread that tied the companies' education programs together.

Even though the three companies existed thousands of miles from each other they produced the same enrollees. Each company found their strength in the academic department and pursued it as much as possible. The three companies were also quick to adapt to the changing need of their enrollees as well. The Director of Camp Education, for a time, Howard Oxley understood the significance of adaptation for success. The academic program provided evidence that middle class traits were consistently promoted to the youth. However, that system applied not only to that portion of the educational program. The vocational half of the program found success much in the same way and found that each company also had different needs to fit their local communities.

## CHAPTER 2

### VOCATIONAL AND JOB TRAINING

The transition from the economy of the 1920s into the Great Depressions had a uniqueness when it came to employment. In the twenties most everyone who wanted a job had one. A time of prosperity following the Great War afforded citizens the option to pursue just about any career they wanted, specifically the veterans from the war utilized low loan rates to start business or purchase nice homes. The greatest difference was simply that people went from living outside their means, mostly via credit lines, into living outside their means because there simply was no money. This changed the idea of employment.

In years prior to the crash the establishment of credit allowed those who lived with small incomes to live just a little better. Working class Americans found that the only real difference between their jobs and wages was hope. The twenties instilled the idea that hard work could move anyone up the class ladder to a better life. After the crash of the stock market that hope was destroyed. Historian Caroline Reef stated, "Working people, who put in 49 hours a week on average in 1926 and who took home a little more than \$26 per week, might not have been able to afford every convenience of modern life, but they were confident that someday they would."<sup>1</sup> Working class Americans had to take a new outlook on the job world. The Great Depression brought

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<sup>1</sup> Reef, 203



about the age of the skilled laborer; which was a main characteristic of middle class professionals.

The development of a skilled labor force became a prominent problem for Franklin Roosevelt when he took office in 1933. Roosevelt had to ask himself, how do I assist such a massive group of Americans that have few skills to enter an extremely competitive job market? Within the famous first one-hundred days, FDR created a number of work programs to employ the vast number of workers, who prior had little to no skills or education to set them apart from others in the realm of unemployed. Programs such as the PWA, WPA, and the CCC were his solutions to that question. All programs had their own unique education systems, but the CCC carried the most diverse opportunities for the young unemployed men.

As the Education Director of the CCC, Oxley had a positive outlook on the CCC at all times. He especially found that the vocational and job training were consistently showing progress. In a summary of the state of the Corps in 1935 Oxley stated that the cooperation between local schools and institutions enhanced the training programs offered. He offered examples such as in California, "I think of one in California at Fallbrook, where last winter the courses of Union High School were opened up to enrollees in Company 987, and there they pursued such useful subjects as bookkeeping, typing, woodworking, English, and natural science." The correspondence work detailed by Oxley presented the strong conviction by the CCC to advance the youth towards advanced education which not only included academia but that of trade skills as well.

Another prominent example stated by Oxley was from the Ninth Corp Area, "Since September 1, 1934, more than thirty five thousand enrollees in that one corps area alone have taken correspondence courses."<sup>2</sup> Oxley went on to mention many examples of the courses taken from blueprint reading to diesel engine and even elementary aeronautics.

The vocational options outlined by Oxley were similar to job training aspects of the CCC, however, the vocational courses were viewed as more recreational purposes then actually for a future job. The job training outlined by the CCC was more preparation on how to secure a job then just acquiring the necessary skills. Not only was acquiring the necessary skills important but knowledge of how to find connections in the business world and impress them was equally or more important. Oxley specifically stated, "Actual experience in preparation for a job is being stressed in the educational program of numerous camps. Enrollees are brought in contact with business men, technically trained persons, and work projects that afford wonderful opportunity for practical training."<sup>3</sup> Oxley understood that preparation for meeting the employer and selling their skill sets was necessary for the middle class professional job market. The only exception to the rule were apprenticeships, which were making a comeback in the CCC especially in the trade skills.

All the ideas brought together from Oxley could be summed up in one word, self-commoditization. The notion that not only do products need promotional advertisements, so do people. Historian Mary McComb, addressed the notion that the depression forced

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<sup>2</sup> Oxley, 142. Includes both quotations from the paragraph.

<sup>3</sup> Oxley, 142

the person into the marketplace to sell their skills. McComb stated, "Men were expected to compete in the commercial marketplace to attain jobs. . . Self-commoditization required self-promotion, marketing oneself just like any other product."<sup>4</sup> Those of middle class had previously been employed with occupations that required professional skill sets and to this end they also had to learn to sell those skills. The CCC helped prepare the working class youth for that practice.

Company 1370 of Crewe, Virginia had an urban focus or a more white collar approach to their vocational programs. One of the prominent programs that appeared in the company was the printing class. In August of 1936 the Company began its first program in type set and printing. The equipment was rented from the local newspaper "Crewe Chronicles." The camp newspaper stated "It is hoped that in a short time the press will be printing letter paper for the company and making a specialty of printing individual paper for the boys with their own name and address on it at a moderate cost."<sup>5</sup> The article went on to state that hopes were high that the class would be ready soon to start printing issues of the *Lucky 13*, the camp newspaper. The printing class provided a prime course where vocational and job training met. The printed paper was the primary media for most Americans to connect with the community and the larger world. Such a course would allow for quick access to class mobility through white collar work experience.

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<sup>4</sup> McComb, 6

<sup>5</sup>"Ye Olde Press Prints First Job," *Lucky 13*, August 25, 1936

The class brought their first success in November when they published the first page of the *Lucky 13*. That was not the only opportunity afforded the class. That same month brought an opportunity to publish a column in the local town newspaper "Crewe Chronicles". For Company 1370 relationships with local businessmen were the key to the success of printing class.<sup>6</sup> Relationships with colleges and business became the cornerstone that built many of the vocational courses. Local experts in the fields were by the greatest resource that the camp could take advantage of. Community connections also brought direct contact with middle class job experiences.

Among the tools that the Virginia Company used was film. Most of the companies brought in films to supplement existing courses or to allow basic training for courses that were not offered. One such example in September of 1936 exemplified their use of film. That month a film was brought in on the new technology of the diesel engine. An article on the film stated, "It was remarkable the strides made by this type of engine in all branches of industry where mechanical power costs play such an important part. Remarkable savings in fuel and maintenance costs were shown."<sup>7</sup> The statement given in the article gave such an expression of wonder at the new technologies of the day. Such films were important to keep those interested in mechanics up to date with the current technology so that they might be at the forefront of their field when their time in the Corp ended. Films were brought in regularly and the companies always kept their library stocked with films at the ready for eager minds.

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<sup>6</sup> "Newspaper Staff Gets New Assignment," *Lucky 13*, November 25 1936

<sup>7</sup> "Interesting Movies Shows," *Lucky 13*, Sept 25 1937

Also in the category of technology was the popularity of the photography class. The growing popularity of the class led to an increase of enrollees taking photos around camp of a variety of sceneries. The camp wished to encourage the initiative of those in the class and published an article with some advice on how and when to get the best pictures. Such as, "Look for the unusual pose. One film the other night had been exposed by looking through the horn up at the flag pole. Let the two people in a picture look at each other sometimes instead of at the Kodak--especially if they are boyfriend and girlfriend." Photography for many was a hobby by most accounts and a uniquely middle class experience.

One of the great benefits of the vocational course work was, in most respects, its symmetry to the types of work the men completed throughout the day. Certain courses allowed a supplementary education to their "jobs" and brought their conservation work into a larger practical picture. One such example was a soil conservation class initiated with the Virginia Company. The camp newspaper columnist stated, "This will be a great help to those boys working in the field and give them a chance to really see the "why" of what they are doing. Especially helpful will this be to those boys expecting to return to the farm. It will teach them practices, many of which will prove beneficial to themselves."<sup>8</sup> Class such as the soil conservation courses were exactly what Oxley referred to when he spoke of catering the course work to the needs of the enrollees. The camp found that many of the boys in the camp would return to farms to take over for their fathers. A soil conservation class would not only introduce new techniques to protect the

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<sup>8</sup> "Soil Conservation Class to Begin," *Lucky 13*, December 1937

land but better suit these young men to pursue their future careers in agriculture. Classes such as these were prevalent in all camps but each camp was unique and catered toward a professional work environment.

Sometimes on the job training was not always available especially for those who sought jobs that could not be provided for at camp. To supplement this void the library which kept many films on different occupations also, like all libraries, kept a great many books on hand. The library specific to the Virginia Company always tried to keep a balance between the recreational books and the training books. One such example made an appearance in the May 1938 edition of their camp newspaper. The article stated the books which came in "cover a great many phases of employment. The need and training necessary in several trades are covered, Forestry, Photography, Auto Mechanics, and some of the white collar jobs."<sup>9</sup> The library pointed again to Oxley's plan to keep the education programs fluid and capable of being molded to the individual needs of the enrollees.

Despite all the customization a camp could do there were those young men who felt nothing compelling them to participate. If the depressed economy was not enough to motivate the men of the camp, their peers took up the harness to provide the realities of their situations. One concerned editor of the camp newspaper recognized that the apathy had grown enough to warrant concern. An article that ran in September of 1938 asked the simple and hard questions such as,

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<sup>9</sup>"New Reference Library Received in Camp," *Lucky 13*, May 1938

How much simple figuring can you do? Suppose you were offered a job as foreman of a working gang? Could you figure out a pay roll for ten men working under you at 16 cent an hour? Suppose they get lame? Could you still figure it out? And if you were working for a man, could you check up to see if he was paying you the right amount at the end of the week? All grocery men aren't honest, you know. Do you get overcharged for some of the things you buy? . . . If had to write to ask a man for a job, would you know how to get it? Could he [glean] from your letter, what you wanted? Lots of busy en haven't time to guess, and you might lose the chance to get something worthwhile.<sup>10</sup>

The questions posed by the editor were the real questions these men had to ask themselves when preparing for their futures. Something as basic as making change and understanding currency allowed for a partnership between the job training aspects of the program and the academic. The article promoted the advantages of possessing math skills which in turn promoted the importance of the academic programs. Foremost the last part of the article spoke to the necessity of clear written speech to pursue jobs. The questions brought forth in the article address some of the foundational skills necessary for a successful future in the middle class where these men would become active members with commerce.

When it came to job training opportunities none were as beneficial as working with the source i.e. businessmen. Company 1370 brought in the owner of the local Hosiery Mill, William Farbach, to hold an instructional lecture on "How to Get and Hold a Job." A column in the camp newspaper wrote "He gave the boys some good advice in the way of getting and holding a job. He gave several demonstrations of interviewing applicants for jobs. . ."<sup>11</sup> The greatest source for job preparation were those in charge of employment and local businesses. Opportunities afforded these men such as bringing in

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<sup>10</sup> "Do you want it?" *Lucky 13*, September 1938

<sup>11</sup> "Local Business Man talks to Class," *Lucky 13*, February 1940.

a local businessman gave them something not afforded to all people. Such a leg up in the job hunting market would certainly allow them to stand apart in the struggling economy. Such were the practices of the CCC, at least the Virginia Company in that case.

These were the different applications Company 1370 used to encourage and teach vocations to all enrollees. The Virginia Company focused more on the white collar work or any work with specific skill sets. That is not to say that courses like woodworking and mechanics were not present, they were present in almost every camp. By looking through the articles on vocational class promotion, the Virginia region focused on classes such as photography and printing more so than physical labor courses. That was not the case in all regions. Company 1708 from Arkansas showed more of a balance between the classes of vocation and also encouraged more correspondence work with local colleges for advanced training.

The great slump in job availability left over by the Great Depression allowed for a shift in types of employment. The United States job market began to focus on a more high skilled worker due to the over availability of workers. The CCC realized the trend that emerged and sought to jump ahead. A news article in a CCC paper from Company 1708 stated, "Statistics show that there are many openings for jobs which have not been filled because of the lack of trained workers, so today the slogan should be 'Train for some kind of job.'" The focal point of the job training campaign initiated by the CCC was to get these men in any sort of profession.<sup>12</sup> However the jobs encouraged required

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<sup>12</sup> "Training for A Job," *Airs of Ozone*, February 1936



training in one specific skill set, which orientated itself more towards a middle class skilled labor.

That job training or vocational course work came in many forms. Much like Company 1370, the Arkansas Company 1708 also looked to film to add supplementary effect to the existing vocational courses. An article that ran in the camp newspaper, *Airs of Ozone*, explained that relationship best,

One of the best ways to balance an educational program is to include motion pictures, especially of the educational type. Films are easily procured which will fit into any class, that is, films on bridge construction may be shown in connection with a class of the same subject. During the month of February 88 reels of film were presented to this company: 25 of which were educational and 63 recreational.<sup>13</sup>

The marriage of the media film reels and traditional course work allowed a broader spectrum of education to be pursued in each class. Film also added a cheap way to provide what a teacher could not, which provided the enrollees the benefit that most in their respective vocations were not. The addition of film, such as in Company 1708, allowed for a broad range of customizable educational tools. If a class was not offered enrollees were given the option to teach themselves via the use of film. As director of the education system of the CCC for a time, Howard Oxley was on target when he emphasized the need to tailor the education to the students, in this case the young men enrolled.

Supplementary films were regularly used throughout the years in the education programs. Another noteworthy praise article appeared years later in the camp newspaper

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<sup>13</sup> "Attractions of Stage and Screen," *Airs of Ozone*, February 1936

on the growing trend of the educational films especially in the vocational fields. The article ran,

The Sponsorship Film of personal interest in the boys of our camp has done wonders as far as new or renewed interest in the educational program is concerned. A larger percentage of participation in some organized class work is prevalent and the trend seems to be toward a major interest in Vocational and Job training Courses. Many good interesting teaching helps and aids have been provided by educational films and film strips during the past month.<sup>14</sup>

The article expressed that the company had found great success with the educational films and even found a great percentage were used in the vocational programs. In addition the article showed that even over a four year gap the prominence of the educational film remained at the forefront of the educational tools.

The educational system built for these camps were never meant to be factories to bring in skill-less workers and quickly ship them out to any job possible. The program was designed to help these young men find their calling through provision of great opportunities. The camp newspaper at Company 1708 ran an article addressing the concern that finding jobs outside the CCC should be career focused not just any job,

Sooner or later we must all leave the CCC. It is a temporary step in our lives a layover in preparation for better things. Every man in camp is justified in looking forward to the day when he can step into something better than the opportunity offered to him here in camp.

But it is a good idea to be careful in taking that step. Be sure that you have a job that offers you something worthwhile when you cut loose. Don't get your discharge and then find that the job you were after is just the promise of a job.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> "Education," *Forest Trails*, February 1940

<sup>15</sup> "On Jobs," *Air of Ozone*, September 25, 1936

The greatest accomplishment the CCC could provide was simply to prepare these men for a career and see them achieve that goal. The CCC also understood that finding any job would not produce the best, most efficient workers. The working class men had a job, a middle class man had a career. Someone must love what they do or at least enjoy the job enough to give it enough effort to create a quality product. This idea was the core behind the article and what made the vocational aspect of the CCC educational system built for middle class promotion.

The vocational system that achieved success in Arkansas found different focuses than that of Virginia. Each camp had similar class, probably had almost identical courses in most cases. However the major difference was interest and those emphasized in the camp. The company from Virginia had a steady focus of courses like photography and printing. Arkansas contained those same courses but a greater interest in manual arts programs. An article that ran in November 1936 provided numbers supporting that fact. The popular courses were broken down as such, "Truck Driving still leads in popularity with Mechanics second. Carpentry and Operation of Heavy Machinery are increasing in enrollment each week. Thirty-three boys are taking truck driving, thirty-two are enrolled in mechanics, and nineteen are signed up for carpentry and the course in Heavy Machinery Operations."<sup>16</sup> Given that the typical enrollment of a camp like 1708 probably contained around a hundred or two hundred enrollees, numbers that range from a quarter to half of the enrolled group presented a convincing trend.

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<sup>16</sup> "Education," *Airs of Ozone*, November 1936

The Arkansas Company also brought the correspondence courses into a more prominent role than the company in Virginia. One prime example of these courses were in the subjects of Radio and Diesel Engines. Both were relatively new technologies at the time and offered a great opportunity for new jobs. An article in the camp newspaper wrote this on radio, "Our classes are not merely dug out of complicated text books, but are practical experiments and experience on simple circuits under usual working conditions." The class mentioned was done as a correspondence course through the University of North Dakota. Similarly the article wrote on the Diesel Mechanic course, "In line with the prominence which diesel engines are receiving in the mechanical world, four of Mr. Rambo's top notch machine operators have enrolled in a Diesel Engine course through the University of North Dakota."<sup>17</sup> These courses offered many benefits for the enrollees. First they were offered at a minimal cost to the men, typically only a few dollars. Secondly the courses did not take up much time during the week and gave the benefit of college credit for a future degree. Thirdly, if those enrolled did not go on to achieve a degree the courses usually offered a certificate to prove expertise in a field to increase eligibility for skilled jobs.

Along with all the ways of receiving vocational or job training education the best experience always came with practical application. One such example with Company 1708 was the Blacksmithing course and the traveling exhibit they created. The display was described as follows,

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<sup>17</sup> "Education," *Airs of Ozone*, January 1937

The display was designed for an educational exhibit of Company 1708 and vividly explains a real method of Conservation of materials, Knives from broken saw blades were shown. hammers made from discarded axles, punches, chisels, tongs, screwdrivers, bits, nail sets, pinchbars, and even a frow are displayed. All are made from discarded materials and scraps.<sup>18</sup>

The exhibit brought together two important aspects of the CCC program, conservation and practical training. Conservation awareness was a technique attributed to and educated middle class of person, not so much for the working class. With conservation literally at the core of the CCC it was expected that these men were guided toward a middle class future. Examples such as these were of paramount importance to the enrollees and it also gave them a chance to gain recognition for their accomplishments.

Another unique way the enrollees pursued training in their respective vocational or trade fields was through apprenticeships. A concept that has a long tradition in the trade work force now made a public resurgence in the CCC. Company 1708 was among the camps that sought to promote a program of apprenticeships,

We really think it would be a splendid idea if every rated position in the company had a special man listed as apprentice, with the man holding the rated position required to assist him and keep check of the time spent in training him. This apprentice business pays dividends, and the CCC is one of the last frontiers for it.<sup>19</sup>

The last sentence really hit the core of the issue. The CCC used any and all tools available tools to provide accessibility and options for the enrollees to gain valuable experience. The apprenticeship program allowed two key advantages right out of the gate. First the apprentice worked with a master or someone who had a handle on their

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<sup>18</sup> Editorial, *Airs of Ozone*, February 1937

<sup>19</sup> Editorial, *Airs of Ozone*, April 1937

particular trade. Second was the ability to gain firsthand experience in their desired trade right away and understand how the trade works.

The vocational course work was aimed towards trade work in an attempt to prepare the young men toward future careers. Many of the courses mentioned such as diesel mechanics, blacksmithing, and leatherworking were among those labor trade directed courses offered in Company 1708. The Arkansas Company found a greater balance between the two than that of Virginia. That said the company had its fair share of skill labor focused courses. Among them was bookkeeping. One course update in the camp newspaper stated, "Those enrollees have decided the line of work that they desire to follow in life and find that bookkeeping will be a vital aid in the conduct of their business."<sup>20</sup> Jobs requiring bookkeeping skills were reserved for towns and cities where some of these men would likely end up. Courses like these were another step towards a diverse education program but remain another indicator of geographic differences.

The third and final area of the country examined was that of the rural Midwest in the state of Nebraska. Nebraska stood in stark contrast to the other two geographically with a large agricultural heritage and a population that was quite small. Towns in the Nebraska were typically extremely rural numbering in the hundreds and provided a unique cultural take on the CCC experiment. The vocational courses especially took on a separate role than that of their cousins to the south and to the east. A focus fell more toward agriculture because most of these men would leave and work on their family

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<sup>20</sup> "Educational," *Forest Trails*, February 1939 and "Certificates," *Forest Trails*, May 1939

farm. That said, the breakdown of how the educational program function for vocational looked similar.

The first example was the ability to make course work relevant. Like their cousin camps, Company 2732 of Ravenna, Nebraska found difficulty in making the courses flow with the jobs they eventually have. One such example was the class held on Economics. An article in their camp newspaper praised the practical applications,

Enrollees taking economics study such subjects that will be of practical use to them. For the past month, members of the class have studied banking and money. Bank statements were studied and efforts were made to determine the strength of financial institutions.

Previous to that time, one month was spent on the subject of insurance. Such subjects as organization, kinds of fire insurance companies, different types of life insurance policies such as term, ordinary, twenty pay life, endowments, family income, annuities, retirement, educational, and juvenile were studied.<sup>21</sup>

Practical skills were the real educational opportunities men sought with the vocational course work. To be able to work directly with the kinds of situations and skills necessary for the jobs they wish to pursue would make them more able candidates than the numerous others out there who sought the same job. The CCC found out quickly practical applications were the best means of promoting middle class work techniques.

Given the nature of the location as far more rural and agrarian than their counterparts, the Nebraska Company had a greater variety and interest in their agriculture programs. Much like the practical application of the finance program, the company offered an agricultural project that sought to achieve much the same result. A course

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<sup>21</sup> "Economics Class is Made Practical," *The Buffalo Bellow*, January 1936

called General Agriculture found an interest in Truck Farming and tailored one of the sections of the course towards that end. The course was described as such,

Since one of the agricultural projects is a vegetable tract, much that is practical will be learned. This truck project contains quite a variety of vegetables including cabbage, carrots, spinach, peas, beans, lettuce, cucumbers, asparagus, cauliflower, turnips, squash, radishes, onions, and peppers.

The class will learn modern methods for care of the products, which will include how to tie, clean, and market the vegetables. They will also take up a study of Markets and market conditions.<sup>22</sup>

The ability to diversify to fit the needs of the enrollees was exactly the mentality of CCC. The company found a niche interest among one of their popular classes and molded one of the units to fit. Agriculture was the predominant way of life for Nebraska and enhancing farm practices in the way the article described allowed that vocation to expand into new areas not previously thought of. New teachings such as truck farming also allowed these men to break down traditional agricultural barriers in their area and expand the market, which in turn not only helped the men find jobs but create jobs.

One of the great benefits to the CCC camps was their surrounding communities. The camps in Virginia and Arkansas found the same fact to be true. The communities around them provided a great resource, one that the educational programs themselves could not replicate. Communities gave the camps access to real businessmen and opportunities to communicate with them to learn the trade secrets of how to obtain jobs and keep them. One such program with the Nebraska Company facilitated that

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<sup>22</sup> "Study of Truck Farming Interests," *The Buffalo Bellow*, May 1936



interaction. A talk was planned for the camp where they brought in local businessmen to speak on their respective fields. An article that ran in the camp newspaper explained,

Plans are now being made to secure a series of Vocational talks for the Company during the months of July, August, and September.

These talks will be given by leaders in their respective fields, and the present plans are to have three guest speakers each month. Those speakers engaged to date include Mr. Geo Winslade, manager of the Ravenna Mills, Ravenna; J.G. Love, owner of a large Undertaking and Furniture establishment, Ravenna; Lyman Cass, publisher of the Ravenna News; and the county farm agent.<sup>23</sup>

Talks such as the one the article described were an ever important resource. The session set up the company allowed the enrollees a brief look into the options that laid before them once their time in the Corp ended. The speakers mentioned gave the men options and necessary information to make informed decisions for their future careers. The most important take away was the real world application, these speakers were members of the middle class and in turn passed on the skills necessary to achieve the mobility necessary to become like themselves.

Not only was the local community of great benefit to these men but on a national scale there were businessmen ready to aid wherever they could. Company 2732 received literature from prominent companies throughout the United States for educational purposes. An article in the camp newspaper announced their arrival,

Free literature sent by business firms and corporations serve as a valuable aid in the camp's education program. Not only does it contain valuable information, but it opens up new avenues for possible employment. Possibly the best received during the present month are: charts and graphs from the Ford Motor Co;

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<sup>23</sup> "Vocational Talks Planned for Camp," *The Buffalo Bellow*, June 1936

Chevrolet Motor Car Co. and Pennzoil Oil Co. Also valuable booklets from the Sperry Gyroscope Co.; various tractor and airplane companies.<sup>24</sup>

Literature, such as the ones spoken of in the article, gave insight into the types of work these men would be into for such companies. The graphs and charts provided probably contained information on sales, salaries, and position mobility. For companies as large as Ford and Chevrolet to provide pamphlets and other information to the CCC signified that they knew the value of the program with intentions of procuring men for skilled labor positions within their companies. Assistance from large corporations allowed for direct access to mobility options.

Company 2732 was also clever about how they approached the advertisement of each class. The camp paper helped to advertise classes to the enrollees. Articles on the available courses appeared in such a way that not only gave an idea of what the course was about but also gave some intrigue into the subject. One example was a course on Psychology,

Can you concentrate? Having decided to do one thing can you then gather all your powers of reasoning and bring all you faculties to aid you in the uninterrupted accomplishment of that one thing you wish to effect? The art of being able to concentrate is mastered by few, but it is within the reach of everyone. Our psychology class can help you improve, among many other things, your powers of concentration.<sup>25</sup>

Subjects, such as psychology, provide an excellent example of the collaborative relationship among the education program. The article instilled the idea that any accomplishment required concentration. Therefore even a subject that could be

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<sup>24</sup> "Free Literature Aids in Educational Program," *The Buffalo Bellow*, May 1936.

<sup>25</sup> "Psychology Class," *The Buffalo Bellow*, November 1936.

considered academic also aptly applied itself to any career choice. A promotion that included self-serving questions that prompted the reader to look inward and realize that they indeed asked those same questions of themselves. A class in psychology went as far as to promote the necessity for skills beyond basic career skills, that hard work alone will not achieve their goals. A collaboration of the academic and vocational produced the most effective means to move up the class ladder.

Even if they found the right vocation, find a job was always the most difficult task. The CCC camps tried to pair each of the enrollees with employment services so as to give them the best results. Success can also be in the details and that was the focus on a small article in the company's newspaper. The article wrote on the importance of verbiage for the paperwork at the employment services. The article stated, "When you go to the Re-employment office to see about a job use the word "application" rather than "register." This idea comes from the members of the Nebraska State Re-employment service and the National re-employment service."<sup>26</sup> A small piece of advice but an important one. If one word meant the difference between a job and no job it's a piece of information these enrollees needed to hear.

Despite their deep roots in agrarian society the company from Nebraska also held vocational courses in more white collar jobs. One such opportunity began in 1940 when a Library Management course was organized. The camp hoped to encourage those who were already active in the library to make a career out of their interest. The course would

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<sup>26</sup> "Advice to Job Hunters," *The Buffalo Bellow*, January 1938.

include a certificate of completion, like most course did, so future employers were aware of the time and effort put into their class. An article on the new course ran in the camp newspaper,

The assignment of Mr. Lyle Van Wormer to our WPA Education project opens up a wonderful opportunity for some of our most ambitious enrollees to learn a type of work and get the necessary experience which should open up either a career for them or give them training which should help them get a job to enable them to go through school.

Mr. Van Wormer is an experienced librarian and it is planned to organize a group to receive instruction in library work. Our library is to be catalogued and managed according to the most up-to-date library practices. The group will get experience in this work as well as in the everyday operation of a library. There will also be instruction in repairing and rebinding books. Upon satisfactory completion of the course a certificate will be issued which should really help land a job in some library either full time or part time.<sup>27</sup>

In a class on library management offered a unique opportunity which brought together hands on experience in conjunction with necessary course work. It was a class that evolved out of interest in the library system. The camp recognized that the course was intended for those who wanted to pursue a career in libraries, but they also found that another benefit in the income create from a library job to fund an education. The article itself recognized the marriage between the two factions of the education program. Academia and vocation training worked in tandem in the camps as they would in the life afterwards.

The educational program the CCC brought to the US found its greatest success with the vocational program. Oxley stated that the best asset that the CCC had to offer was the ability to customize the program to the enrollees. That idea was never more

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<sup>27</sup> "Library Management Course Presents Fine Opportunity," *The Bow Blower*, February 1940.

present when three separate examples of companies stretched across the United States. Depending on geographic locations the vocational courses were created to fit the local job community that surrounded the camp area. The men that enrolled in each of the CCC camps would likely go out and work in the surrounding area when their time in the Corp was over.

A depressed economy found the young males of the 1930s in a state of bewilderment. The men who had known that hard work would bring them the prosperity that their parents had achieved. That notion of work changed dramatically when the job market plummeted and hard work was no longer the commodity of work. The main jobs that survived the depression were skilled labor positions, which became the main focus for the vocation and job training programs. The education program tailored the courses so that the men would gain practical experience as well as the book learning. The practical experience was the key advantage that the Corp brought to the men. Local businessmen became a valuable resource for the CCC. The surrounding community provided a wealth of businessmen that assisted the camps programs in many ways. These business owners would come into camps and to lectures on their respective careers as well as provide resources for middle class careers. Each camp provided a different flavor to their vocational programs.

Out east in Virginia, Company 1370 found that their vocational courses focused around white collar based work. Much of their vocational classes included subjects such as bookkeeping, radio, and photography. That was not to say that many of the popular

programs included auto and diesel mechanics. The company provided an ideal example of how the local community came to the aid of the CCC camp. Local newspaper publisher brought a press in for the company to use to print their own camp newspaper but also allow their journalism class to gain practical experience in printing. Much like the academic counterpart in the education program, the vocational program utilized films as part of enhancing their courses. The films were used to supplement for programs that could not be offered or assist with the current programs in place. The camp library consistently advertised that new films were flowing through the library, many provided by large companies. Film was a constant presence in all camps.

Down south in Arkansas the program existed much like in Virginia. Some of the key difference were in the application of the correspondence courses. The company in Arkansas worked with Nebraska State University to provided next level education with many of the courses in the company. Higher education was key to middle class careers. Company 1708 also kept a diverse vocational program providing experience with banking and radio, while also working with diesel mechanics and agriculture. One problem that all camps encountered was encouraging their men to involve themselves in the programs present in the camp. The Arkansas Company was adamant to keep their men involved and found unique ways of presenting their class work as example, such as creating an exhibit of blacksmithing tools created out of broken farm tools. The greatest divergence from a balance of vocational focus existed further north in the Midwest.

Company 2732 of Nebraska presented the prime example of preparation of men for their career path based on the surrounding community. Nebraska was almost entirely agrarian and the CCC camp reflected that. The camp provided and boasted a variety of agriculture courses from basic agriculture to diverse aspects such as truck farming. The company also knew the value of practical experience. Not only did the company bring their agriculture courses into a relationship with local farmers but they also provide practical experience for as many other courses as possible such as library management. Company 2732 was also ambitious on the job hunting market. The company brought in resources from all sources, including major businesses. Literature in libraries and local business were also among the resources brought forth for the enrollees to utilize.

Many trends emerged among geographic and state boundaries when it came to CCC educational programs. Each found success with tools such as libraries and films. The greatest asset, which was recognized by even the administration of the CCC, was the local community. Without the support of the local communities around the camps the working class youth would have found it difficult to learn of middle class careers and practices. The Corp realized that these men who entered into their respective camps came from the area surrounding them, it was important that their community be involved with their future. The future was a constant worry for the men of the CCC and it was not only the job skills that required work, the men had to learn to adjust to a new middle class life after the CCC as well as the new social sphere that came with it

## CHAPTER 3

### LOVE, CITIZENSHIP AND GOOD HABITS

The legacy of the CCC made appearances not only through occupational and intellectual success, but also through citizenship as well as good habits. McComb wrote of the stress and evolution of the American citizen in the Great Depression. The middle-class especially suffered a great deal during that time, McComb went on to state,

The Depression proved particularly harrowing for middle-class Americans who were raised to embrace the ideal of competitive individualism and the notion that hard work and individual striving would lead to material and emotional security. The pecuniary and psychic crises assaulted people's sense of identity, often creating the notion that if one's personal worth could be measured in dollars earned, so too could one's personal worthlessness.<sup>1</sup>

What McComb was trying to get at was the extent of the bankruptcy of the country. Not only did the financial sector of the country fall into disarray but so too did the resolve of the American people. All aspects of society went bankrupt. McComb made a harrowing observation on the depths to which she felt the middle-class was affected by the depression facing the United States, that effect was felt tenfold for the working class. The men who had been earning minimal wages as it was found themselves earning practically nothing to feed families. Working class families had to give up anything not essential which meant all life had to be devoted to making ends meet. A broken working class required heavy assistance.

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<sup>1</sup> McComb, 1



Those who had come from nothing were determined as ever to rebuild better than before, because they knew hard work no longer would bring them success someday. Those who enlisted in the CCC found a menagerie of opportunities to lift themselves up. The communities that the youth created in the CCC camps allowed for a renewed concept of camaraderie and community relationships. Those who had fallen hardest found it difficult to lead the lives they once thought hard work could help them achieve. Once the country rebuilt itself, these people would also require the necessary social skills to meld with the new middle class society they prepared for. Many of the men involved in these programs had lost the luxury of such things, families had greater concerns of money and work that the idea of something like manners was not a priority. The CCC became the surrogate parent to these men when they left home to reinvent themselves.

The notion of a socially bankrupt society across the classes was not just a new phenomenon discovered, the Commissioner of Education in 1935, John Studebaker noticed that the CCC provided a greater source of personal recovery beyond academic or vocational training. Studebaker wrote a summary on the benefits and problems with the CCC in 1935. In his summary he immediately addresses the long reaching benefits of the Corps, "For although the CCC was inaugurated primarily as a work project to conserve America's natural resources and to provide employment for jobless youths whose families were on the relief rolls, the moral and spiritual value of the CCC overshadows these material aspects."<sup>2</sup> The values Studebaker spoke of where the personality and social

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<sup>2</sup> John W. Studebaker, "An Overview of the Civilian Conservation Corps" *Junior-Senior High School Clearing House* 10, no 3 (March 1935) 134

attributes that had become devoid in working class society following the turmoil of the stock market crash. The CCC first priority was the establishment of jobs for the unemployed and bring the young men of the country back to work. The conservation efforts performed by the Corps were of paramount importance, however, Studebaker knew that there was more at stake with these men than just a job.

In his overview, Studebaker understood that the men that entered into the Corps were in the most dire of straits. These people knew what life was like before the crash and were still reeling, even in 1935, on where to go to provide for their families or even just themselves. Studebaker stated, "At a period of life when young men should be starting their lifework and setting up homes of their own, hundreds of thousands, in fact millions, of America's youth population were tasting the humiliation of defeat; they could not earn their own bread and butter."<sup>3</sup> That humiliation brought them to the edge and many were willing to do all that was necessary to change their situation. Before the situation got dire, the CCC brought an opportunity to give them real work. Studebaker made a poignant observation that during this time period most men who were at the cusp of adulthood around the age of eighteen into their early twenties were about to start off in the world by themselves, and many would raise a family. The depression challenged that social norm and altered the natural course of life for a young man as they knew it.

McComb also made mention of the drastic shift in social roles as a result of the depression. With the families and individuals devoid of any income whatsoever the male

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<sup>3</sup> Studebaker, 134

of a family or a single woman could no longer depend on the typical status quo to provide. The humiliation that Studebaker mention kept skepticism in the lifestyle they once knew and therefore the youth of America were not willing to invest not only monetarily, but also in their own self worth. That humiliation became the greatest hurdle for the young men to overcome and once again trust in themselves.<sup>4</sup> To make that idea a reality they required all tools at their disposal with included an academic education and training in a specialized skill set, as that seemed to be the opening held in the job market. Along with that the men learned to function in society and in social settings again, this too became one of the standards the CCC carried.

Howard Oxley, Director of Camp Education, wrote articles on the progress of the CCC education programs throughout his time in that position. Oxley believed that citizenship and the development of the whole person following the CCC experience was as important as any other activity in the Corps. In one article published in 1935 Oxley only made a brief mention of the intention of the CCC to provide assistance with citizenship development. Oxley stated, "Before releasing the men from the camps, we attempt to instill in them good citizenship practices and an interest in public affairs."<sup>5</sup> At the time the article was written the program was only a few years old, the intention of the program still remained focused on the conservation with a shifting emphasis toward the education and job training. With the program so young, the director still had an idea of what he expected the young men to take away from the program - middle class qualities.

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<sup>4</sup> McComb, 6

<sup>5</sup> Oxley, 143

A few more years down the road that emphasis came out more prominently in another article on the camps educational programming.

After another four years Oxley published another article on the educational program progress. A key feature was the establishment of guidance programs in the camps to observe and record what the interests and problems of the enrollees were. The key points which Oxley pointed out were more aligned with the sentiment of personal growth outside the realm of job training and preparation. Oxley outlined the findings of the guidance program as follows,

1. Present interests and problems
  - a. Problems in the camp, which are, therefore, a co-operative responsibility on the part of the men with the camp supervisory personnel, for living and working in the camp.
  - b. Problems of individual and personal character, the solutions of which are important to the individuals future.
  - c. Individual interests and needs for educational work.
2. Plans for re-connecting themselves with life after separation from the Corps.
  - a. Re-establishment of family and home relationships.
  - b. Vocational interests.
  - c. Connections with employers and opportunities for employment<sup>6</sup>

The last points Oxley made drew stark change to his earlier review of the CCC. The focus on life after the CCC stood at the forefront of focus which had previous focused on work after the CCC. Oxley focused on the idea that the youth of the camp would be reconditioned for life after the Corp, specifically a life further ahead from where they began. The government was aware that the middle class, which was composed of a professional workforce, would be the driving force for the economy. The points laid

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<sup>6</sup> Howard Oxley "Current Trends in CCC Education" *The Phi Delta Kappan* 21, no 8 (April 1939) 392-393

forth by Oxley define the notion that there were other aspects of the youth that needed to be addressed. To be a part of the middle class the boys had to present themselves as such.

A regional study of three different CCC camps analyzed the different aspects of the educational system, formal and informal. The regional study of the three camps allowed for a diverse geographical and cultural difference between types of enrollees. The location difference provide information as to the effects of the changes and implementation of the lifestyle and citizenship training that as received by the enrollees.

Company 1370 of Virginia found that one of the most important subjects on the minds of these young men were the women in their lives. As Studebaker had stated with his analysis of the CCC, the age group involved, 18 to 25, was at the point in their lives were they normally would be starting a career and a family. Those who had to forego the romantic life in search of an income found that they were in need of some dating techniques. The company newspaper for 1370 published an article on the art of kissing. Techniques of proper techniques for approaching and seizing the moment. Advice like, "The gentlemen should be a little taller, although this is not absolutely necessary. He should have a clean face, kindly eyes, and youthful expression. Don't be too anxious to kiss in a crowd, there are plenty of dark corners. Don't be in a hurry." Another piece of advice was, "While her left hand is in your right, let there be a faint pressure on that, not like the gripe of a vice, but a gentle grasp full of thought, respect and electricity. Hers is slightly on your shoulder. You are heart to heart. Look down at her half closed eyes;

firmly press her to your heart. Don't be in a hurry."<sup>7</sup> Advice in the matters of love, such as the kind presented in the article, was not the type given from a father or mother to a son. The advice was given as a means for these men to attract a different class of person. The working class person was never described as a soft or gentle type, but the article suggests that those attributes were necessary to pursue the love interests they desired. A softer and gentler lifestyle that comingled with the love pursuits was more likely to be found in the financially stable middle class persons. The art of romancing woman was among the foremost mentions on the subjects discussed by these men.

Another tool for the romantically inclined was the advice column. The company paper for 1370 also produced an advice column for those with questions on their romantic ventures. A column entitled, "Miss Molly Elliott's Popular Question Box: Bits of Love" was the name of the semi-regular column. Amongst the advice sought was how to choose the right woman, and when to get married. Men such as Hoss who wrote a column concerning whether or not to wait on marriage until he was more financially stable. In turn Miss Elliott responded,

Dear Hoss:

Truly this is Leap year. But should you leap to far? Really, I don't think you should. May I suggest that you wait until your ship is better fitted for this so long adventure? By acting to soon you may cause your heart to miss a beat and thus affect you financially.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> "Art of Osculation," *Lucky 13*, January 1936. Includes both quotes from paragraph

<sup>8</sup> "Bits of Love," *Lucky 13*, March 1936. Another similar article would appear in the April 1938 edition of *Lucky 13*. The article covered much of the same items and was entitled "Advice to the Unassuming."

The type of advice Hoss asked for was exactly the advice many men were concerned about. Mary McComb in her work on the middle-class and the depression found that a dramatic role shift occurred with the necessity for everyone to search for work, even women.<sup>9</sup> Thus financial stability became just as important as any factor in the pursuit of marriage. Men in the Corps were no different and such resources as the advice column in the company newspaper provided the answers they were not getting anywhere else.

The theme of creating something that will last beyond the CCC continued with another form of relationship, friendship. The CCC also found that the brotherly friendship created in the CCC would be a lasting and invaluable bonus to the young men. One enrollee stated the benefits of friendship as such,

What is it that is needed to make our friendship lasting? Nothing more than a big heart, plenty of kindness, just a little patients, and a bit of old fashioned sympathetic feeling for the other fellow. If we add then, a pleasing personality there's not anything else that's needed.

Friendship in the CCC is the one thing next too, the love of a fine brother. For we are members of one big Army, sticking together in all kinds of weather, for we realize a part of the friendship that shall be lasting will come out of the CCC.<sup>10</sup>

The article offered a path of life that included a gentler kind of person one that had patients and sympathy. Those of the working class had a hard time with many of those attributes. After suffering a great deal at the hands of the broken economy, many of the working class would be frugal and far more self interested. Friendship, as the article described, sought to break the hardened emotions that left deep impressions in the youth

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<sup>9</sup> McComb, 6

<sup>10</sup> "Friendship," *Lucky 13*, April 1936

of the camp. Those who desired to move up in the world required a more flexible and pleasant demeanor, such as in friendship undertaken. The enrollee who wrote on friendship knew that it was not something that came easy to everyone but an invaluable resource for their life after the Corps.

Although relationships were of the forefront of many young men's thoughts, the CCC had other avenues of self improvement. One of the officers in Company 1370 found that there was a need to teach the enrollees of the importance of cleanliness. A change of habits was another important future building exercise. When these men left they would have homes of their own and possibly families. Lt. Koup, the officer who wrote an article on the matter, knew it. He stated, "Cleanliness is next to Godliness. This can be applied in very great way right here in our camp. We eat clean foods. We are taught clean thoughts and to live a clean life. Your families back home are eagerly waiting for the day when you journey home so as to see if you are an asset to your respective communities."<sup>11</sup> That last piece "an asset to your respective communities" was the goal of articles such as this. The notion that after their time in the Corps was done they were expected to become productive and moral members of communities. Habits such as cleanliness were among those that were considered to be standard practice for competent members of a community or in a family.

Citizenship not only meant ones duty to their communities or families, but had patriotic intentions as well. The CCC wanted these young men to possess the necessary

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<sup>11</sup> "Klean and Keep Klean," *Lucky 13*, August 1936



skills to also become functioning members of the country as well, and do their patriotic duty to their country. Editor of the camp newspaper, F.W. Bowles wrote an article on the merits of such patriotic duty and benefits to the country,

Pay taxes and your honest debts. Save and invest for the good of yourself and your family and the government that protects you. Keep clean, obey the laws of the land, and respect these in responsible position for their enforcement.<sup>12</sup>

The men of the Corps knew full well were the path of plenty had taken them. Enrollees such as Bowles knew that a change was necessary to prevent such crisis and it began by instructing the youth for the future. For men of the CCC the government had been that uplifting spirit and it was to it they owed their futures. Patriotism and citizenship were terms married to each other.

One of the more emphasized changes encouraged was that of speech. Most with varying degrees of education and regional slang the proper language fell to the way side. One of the Assistant Leaders John Henry wrote an extensive one page editorial on the matter of speech. He felt that to be an effective speaker was to be an effective person. The use of what he called "The Mother Tongue" was to be rid of slang and slurred words. Henry stated,

If we are effective speakers then we will have a given skill that will enable us to persuade others. This skill can be had by increasing your vocabulary, correcting ones pronunciation and grammar, improving our enunciation, and trying a few good habits speaking thoughtfully. I'm persuaded that speech is just an artificial method of making our wants and ideas known. Have you ever thought about the

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<sup>12</sup> Editorial, *Lucky 13*, June 1937

sales you make every time you speak? well, you do. It doesn't matter to whom you may be speaking you either sell him your idea or he sells you his.<sup>13</sup>

The importance of vocabulary and even regional dialect could not be understated. The article made mention that the art of speech was the key for persuasion and expression. Both of these aspects were effective tools for upward mobility. The middle class was defined more by education and higher skill levels than that of the working class. It was to that end the article spoke. The article ended with the idea that your speech made you a salesperson for your own future, the youth of the camp were being taught the skills to sell themselves to the middle class. The Virginia Company also found that words were not the only important form of etiquette and asked questions about what constituted proper daily etiquette. In response to the growing curiosity an editor of the camp paper published an editorial covering the "need to know" of basic etiquette. The editorial advised,

What people do you want to resemble? Ask yourself that question and answer it frankly. Observe and emulate. Be Sincere. No two individuals can be alike. Good manners, evening clothes, cannot be put away in moth balls for special occasions. Good manners belong to everyday life. Behavior is an important part of success, and those who know the rules are most likely to win.<sup>14</sup>

The editorial went on to explain some basics about the camp etiquette and the in and out thereof. The article also stated that it would continue to publish more on such matters in later issues. That alone showed that etiquette was an important subject amongst these young men. The youth wanted to resemble those who were successful and lived the lives

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<sup>13</sup> "How well can you use mother tongue?" *Lucky 13*, August 1937. A similar article appeared in September as well entitled "Do you want it" which covered how men should approach speech and the written.

<sup>14</sup> "Etiquette Editorial," *Lucky 13*, September 1938. Subsequent articles appeared in months after and were entitled: Behave Yourself." Each issue contained new forms of etiquette issues that faced young men.

of that came with success. Behavior and the rules that went with them were the rules required to be a part of the skilled middle class citizen. The upward mobility was not something that happened overnight it required the adaptation and training to become members of the middle class. The rules required a certain level of etiquette and behavior standards. To win, as the article stated, was to achieve obtain the means to move up.

The Virginia Company appeared to be a well rounded company when it came to issues of personal improvement such as behavior, etiquette, and the arts of opposite sex interactions. Each camp had their own ways of approaching such subjects and focused on different subjects based on the needs and questions of those enrolled. Company 1708 out of Arkansas showed their take on similar matters were slightly different.

Evidence of the subject matter of personal interactions or anything personal appeared in brief in a small article in the camp newspaper. The article was imply titled "To be successful." The concluded, "Learn to think for half an hour each day exclusively on one subject. Plan two hours a day and live according to the plan. Learn to be a good talker by being a good listener."<sup>15</sup> The article was simple but to the point. The first step toward a successful goal or future plans was to make a plan. The essence of the few a sentences was the idea of taking personal time and planning. These men had been accustomed to living a day to day existence without any knowledge of the next meal or paycheck. After their stint in the CCC their prospects were much higher to get a stable job and planning again would be an important factor for the future.

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<sup>15</sup> "To Be Successful," *Airs of Ozone*, June 1936

Much like their brothers in the Virginia company, Company 1708 also found that courtesy was among the etiquette issues that needed to be addressed. One concerned enrollee stated,

It doesn't matter how qualified a man might be to do a certain job, his chances of obtaining that job would be very slim if he didn't make a good personal impression with his prospective employer. Common everyday life throws one in contact with other individuals who are natural forming and opinion of him. the practice of using a simple "Yes Sir", "No Sir", "Mr." or some other title when properly directed goes a long way in creating a good impression. Courteous consideration of others, whether it be at work, at play or at the table is a very valuable help also.

He would go on to state,

To show courtesy to women, to older people, to one's superiors and to one's associates does not mean that you are inferior in any respect but quite the contrary. It should be remembered that men who are a proven success are never too big to notice others and respect their rights regardless of what their position in life might be.<sup>16</sup>

Much like the article on behavior as a matter of following the rules, the same rules applied to the job market. Those who wanted to become a part of the skilled middle class workers had to live to a higher standard. Courtesy as obviously one of the most important rules to move up in status. The article was careful to mention that to be respectful and use terms to denote status was not to denote their own. The terms Mr. and Mrs. were a formality. Respect was the name of the game and the fuel for their success on the way of the class ladder. It was also a matter of masculinity, to bring back the chivalrous man. In that way it was as much about moving up the economic ladder as it was to rebuild the propriety in male identity.

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<sup>16</sup> "Courtesy," *Airs of Ozone*, June 1936. Citation includes both quotes from paragraph.

The Arkansas Company brought personal hygiene into the mix for personal preparation as the Virginia Company did not. One enrollee produced a list of do's and don'ts for the men of the company. The list included,

1. Eat three wholesome meals daily, taking time to chew food thoroughly
2. Get the habit of stooling at the same time each day.
3. Shave daily
4. Get a haircut every two weeks.
5. Brush teeth at least once a day, preferably three times after each meal.
6. Don't overload your stomach.
7. Don't drink alcoholic beverages.
8. Don't go see a sick person for he or she may have a very communicable disease.
9. Don't lend or borrow clothes.
10. Don't wear clothes to tight for you.<sup>17</sup>

The list created by the enrollee gave a regimented version of what they saw as the necessity for a healthy life. The idea of cleanliness was also a sign of upward mobility, the working class who were found in the manual labor jobs involved more contact with dirt. Hygiene was a sign of respect for the self and appearances. The list provided ten specific pieces of advice, some more staunch than others. The enrollee clearly felt that the matter of was strictly personal, such as the idea of not borrowing items. Personal hygiene was an important aspect of the upward mobility the youths of the camps worked to achieve, but it gave the impression that it was a solitary adventure.

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<sup>17</sup> "Do's and Don'ts for Body Health," *Forest Trails*, May 1938

Amongst the changes in society was the repeal of prohibition. With the legal introduction of alcohol back to society the young men of society had to find their balance with intoxicants. Intoxicants became a matter of discussion among the men of 1708. One enrollee had strong views on the role of alcohol in their lives. In an article he wrote,

Sooner, or later, every young man must make up his mind about drinking intoxicants. During his life he will be in one of three classes of society. One class never touches intoxicants. Another class uses intoxicants to an excess. A third class drinks intoxicants, but does it moderately. Drinking is a matter not only of taste, but of intelligence. The man who drinks too much is in the class of those persons who eat too much or who do many other things to the detriment of their health, their position in society or their success in life.<sup>18</sup>

Intoxicants were considered to be directly tied to all that was considered bad behavior and thus the author's separation of classes. Despite his give of one class to moderation, his sentiment clearly weighed on the side of no alcohol. The author believed that alcohol would be the catalyst that destroyed all of what someone worked for. The CCC also did not want intoxicated men at work. At the ages of 18-25 these men were at the cusp of adulthood which meant their ability to legally purchase alcohol. Advice such as the dissuasion from alcohol were meant to create a conversation and understand exactly what they were getting involved with. The article presented yet another moral center to which the CCC addressed through its enrollees as a means to be mentors to the young men.

Moral virtues were amongst the greatest focus by the Arkansas Company. Along with the virtues of courtesy and sobriety, the concept of cheating also sat among them. An editorial addressed the concept of "Playing the game" as a means to broach the subject of leading an honest lifestyle,

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<sup>18</sup> "Drinking Intoxicants," *Forest Trails*, November 1938

The cheat may seem to be on top but life has a way of discovering cheats and then their penalties come rather severe. Learn to play the game fair, observe the rules and study by past experiences in order that you may have an easier and more pleasant game. The code and creed of most athletics is summed up in the immortal words, "For when the one great scorer comes, to write beside your name, it will not be in what you've won or lost, but how you've played the game."<sup>19</sup>

The CCC wanted these young men to take the moral high ground and build a life on a set of rules in life. Much like the earlier article written on success, the CCC and their peers encouraged having a plan set. The editorial encouraged that the plan be built on a set of rules and that dividends will payout. The use of athletic imagery was a particularly effective form of advice given a high participation and popularity for the sports teams within almost all CCC companies.

Much like their geographic cousins in Virginia, the Arkansas boys had the troubles of love. The company newspaper produced a love advice column under the advisement under the guise of the name Prof. Tell S. All. Similar concerns were prominent among the boys of Company 1708 such as Mr. "Chow Can" McAllister,

Dear Prof,

I am a boy in your own CCC camp that is lonesome as a dog without [love]. I need the love of a girl about the same age as myself and I am 19. There are a lot of girls around here as you know but I can't seem to make any head way with them. Please tell me that I am to do to get myself a girlfriend.

The Professor responded,

Dear Chow Can,

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<sup>19</sup> Editorial "Playing the Game," *Forest Trails*, May 1939

Find time to see me some day and I will put you wise to the ways of the women.  
Change clothes and come your hair and maybe that will do some good also use  
some of "Pretty Boy" Billy's tactics and talk it up a little.<sup>20</sup>

Between Virginia and Arkansas a real trend amongst the concerns of the heart prevailed. A common trait among the age group recruited for the Corps. The advice could not have come at a more opportune time. These men are not at home, not in their familiar community element but still seek the romantic future. An unexpected role the Corp assumed as mentors for the "love-lorn" as the article stated but of great concern for these men just coming of age. The Corp was held as the place where a program was tailored to the enrollee, that soon came to include far more than education as such articles provide evidence for.

Another trend connecting the two companies was the subject of speech. The Virginia Company covered the notion of the "mother tongue" and the importance of proper speech. A similar topic was discussed with Company 1708. An article ran as part of a larger one from a youth magazine. The paraphrased work spoke of the relationship between social appearance and correct speech.

Your tongue betrays what you are, what you think, the quality of you. You are judged and placed by the words you use and the voice that powers them and, like it or not, its judgment is accurate. You speak with the voice and the language of the person you are, not with that of the person you hope people think you are.<sup>21</sup>

The article went on to explain the nature of the youths in high school to view proper speech as "sissified." The article suggested the notion that your speech defined which part

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<sup>20</sup> "Advice to the Love-Lorn," *Forest Trails*, November 1939. The article continued to reappear in consecutive months following the initial publishing in November.

<sup>21</sup> Editorial, *Shore Lakes Journal*, August 1940



of society you came from. Unlike the prior article on the differences on local dialect and improved speech continuity, this article suggested that not everyone found the middle class as the place to strive for. Hostility was present, that propriety of speech was something for the "sissies." Nevertheless speech was the foremost tell of the type of person you wanted to portray whether it be a working class or middle class man. The ability to communicate effectively with correct terminology not only showed education but respect. The ability to use correct terminology was an important factor for both the Virginia and Arkansas companies.

The last geographic counterpart was that of Company 2732 in Nebraska. Similar trends among men's manors and citizenship were addressed constantly much like the prior two camps. The men of the Nebraska Company were well aware of the benefits they reaped from the Corps. One article in their camp newspaper compiled a few individuals' experiences of their time in the CCC and how they felt it benefited them. One enrollee stated, "I've been taught respect for law and order. I have been encouraged to be a good American citizen, to better your education in order that I would be a better citizen. I have been told that I was an individual who had possibilities, in short I was given confidence in myself."<sup>22</sup> Confidence was the key term of that man's experience. Through all the teachings of etiquette, citizenship, even the art of love these men were again given confidence that they possessed the skills necessary to become productive members of society again and move their way up. They could then go out into the world

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<sup>22</sup> "Write on Benefits CCC," *The Buffalo Bellow*, January 1936

not as afraid as they once were and project that confidence on their communities. That was the benefit reaped from the CCC, the confidence to be a part of the future.

One subject matter that seemed to run across all state boundaries was the subject of cleanliness. Given that a majority of the work the CCC undertook involved work outdoors as well as work that could be incredibly dirty, cleanliness seemed an important subject for health as well as appearance. An article ran in the camp newspaper that addressed the subject of being clean. Written by the Camp Surgeon, Richard Krause, the article covered all bases for outward cleanliness which included hair, teeth, clothes, fingernails, and face. The doctor advised,

A well groomed head of hair goes a long way toward improving cleanliness of appearance. Hair that is clean, well brushed, and combed is an individual problem and should be given thought and consideration. The eye, under normal conditions will take care of itself-being equipped with tear ducts that wash the eyeball and keep it clean. The teeth are perhaps the most neglected part of a person's anatomy, as far as cleanliness goes. They should be brushed at least once a day-preferably twice. If individual washes teeth once a day it is best to do this after evening meal-in order not to carry decaying material on teeth thru sleep hours.<sup>23</sup>

The article went on to address many more cleanliness practices from top to bottom. Even in an article such as the one written by the Camp Surgeon there was still much for these enrollees to learn. The article not only explained how to keep up an outward pleasant appearance but why it was important. The young men of the company rarely concerned themselves with the ins and outs of their own anatomy, but here Dr. Krause brought home a poignant message. That message was that even the smallest of details of

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<sup>23</sup> Richard Krause, "Cleanliness," *The Buffalo Bellow*, May 1936

cleanliness can make the biggest difference. That tended to be a common theme amongst similar bits of advice given to these enrollees.

Another theme that seemed to become common in the CCC and even in culture in general was earning what you have. It became more prevalent than ever after the onset of the depression that you had to earn your way in every step of life, no hand outs were given. That sentiment was instilled in the enrollees of the CCC and that was why they were constantly encouraged to take all measures to make themselves ready to leave the Corps and create a life for themselves. An article in the camp newspaper addressed the necessity of the idea of earning your way.

Emerson once said that "The source of all we can receive or give is within ourselves." How true is such a statement. It applies to every day, age, and walk of life. Have you ever achieved anything without putting forth some mental or physical exertion? The answer is unquestionably "No."

How then may we improve ourselves? Namely by putting forth every effort capable of man. It is necessary that we do so to live. In wisdom we should begin where our parents left off. Each age demands more wisdom and energy. Action is the requirement of times.

Are we going to earn this life given us or are we going to spend it foolishly? We should strive for success in anything we undertake so as to impress upon the minds of the coming generation (our children) the importance of this life.<sup>24</sup>

The article hit the idea home by not only tying in the concept of earning to personal success but the success of their children as well. The men in the camp were not married and most probably had no children of their own. However, most of these men hoped to find that woman someday and have children of their own, it was to that sentiment that the article touched upon. The article was not just on earning a living, it focused on the idea

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<sup>24</sup> John Shepard, "Earn Life or Lose it?" *The Buffalo Bellow*, June 1937

of discipline. Discipline kept the foolishness out of the minds of enrollees and focused their aspirations for the future. The CCC was constant focused on the middle class placement of their young enrollees.

Of all the lessons the CCC provided the enrollees for future planning for personal success as well as the means to live a wholesome life laid the sense of morality. The other camps focused on the morality of courtesy and similar subjects as a way to live a just life. One subject broached by Company 2732 and neither of the other companies was that of honesty. One enrollee took it upon himself to address the subject in a small editorial in the camp newspaper. The editorial ran,

Honesty is one of the most important factors of life. Be honest with your friends, strangers, and be honest with your enemies. Honesty with friends will make a friendship exist longer than anything else. Honesty with strangers will draw two persons quickly together and cause an everlasting friendship. Honesty to enemies will sometimes cause two persons to become friends all over again. If not friends at least trustful to each other.<sup>25</sup>

On the surface the subject of honesty may seem moot, it should be a concept that many have known from childhood. That may not have been the case for all, especially once people reached levels of desperation they had never even imagined as the depression deepened. The CCC was the constant moral high ground for these young men who had nowhere else to glean these social customs from once they entered camp. The CCC was as much a life coach for many as a job coach.

The companies from Virginia and Arkansas knew full well that speech was the key to winning a job or even being an effective communicator in families and

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<sup>25</sup> Kent, "Honesty" *The Buffalo Bellow*, January 1938

communities. The Nebraska Company felt it was necessary to give the enrollees a lesson on proper introductions. With so many different geographic and cultural centers throughout the United States, each had a tendency to form their own slang. Many regarded slang as a lazy speech or simply unwilling to follow social customs. The camp newspaper felt it necessary to bring a lesson to the youth of the camp on how to make proper introductions. The lesson fell into ten categories,

1. Always introduce a man to a woman.
2. When introducing two men or two women always introduce the younger to the older.
3. Say "May I Present" or "I should like you to know."
4. Always use proper titles such as Miss, Mr, Mrs, Capt, Dr, or Judge.
5. Shake hands like a man with a man. With a woman only if she offers first.
6. Always stand up to be introduced or to make introductions.
7. Look squarely at the person you are meeting. Let your glance be firm but friendly.
8. Say "How do you do" after being introduced. Never say "Pleased to meetcha."
9. Speak names clearly. Drop a hint if you want people to talk.
10. Catch the name if you can. Ask for it if you didn't.<sup>26</sup>

Introductions were the social etiquette expected of those in the skilled middle class society. To properly introduce women was also expected of men, which fell under the social standards of the middle class male as well as the expectations of the chivalrous man. Communication all began with the introduction whether for a job, calling on a woman, or greeting a colleague. Those who wanted to move up the social and economic

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<sup>26</sup> "Check your introductions," *The Buffalo Bellow*, April 1938

ladder must abide by the customs laid out by the higher classes. Those were the rules to abide by. Formality showed a sense of education as well as sophistication. How a young man presented himself was as much important of his class status as the type of work and money he earned. Lessons on introductions were among the important rules of manors as well those expected of the middle class male. The importance of an introduction could be the difference between getting a job or not. The need for lessons such as these were important in the transformation of these boys into men of society.

The lesson that these men came away with from the outset of the depression was that their life could be measured in dollars and cents. The stress of constantly searching for the elusive jobs cause many to abandon all else to gain a foothold in the job market and make a living. Studebaker recognized that these men underwent a dramatic shift in their life line, that was to say, the way they felt their life was to proceed. The men in the Corp were anywhere from the ages of 18 to 25 and were at the cusp of adulthood. Studebaker made the remark that these men were at the point when most would begin families and start their career, and the depression changed that. Men found themselves in constant struggle just to stay afloat with their social aspirations on the back burner.

The CCC found that they had the obligation to educate the whole person, which included more than just academics and vocation. The men had to learn how to become functional members of a new class in society. The simplest of social ambitions such as love, etiquette, speech, and appearance were among the subjects that needed to be taught.

Each of the three camps found that no matter where they were located the men had similar issues to deal with.

The subject of greatest interest between the camps was that of love. The men were in constant struggle on how to pursue the romance in their lives. The answer to that came with the advice column in the camp newspaper. At least two of the camps provided a column for men to write in and express their love problems. Just as Studebaker said, these men were used to be at the point of marriage and families, and the men of the camp still desired that goal. Most of the advice broached the subject of marriage. Upward mobility required a new technique to find women of their class and that required a new set of social tools. How to approach and treat women was not only a matter of masculinity but signified which class of man and what class of woman they pinned for.

Outside of the romance concerns many found themselves lacking in etiquette and speech. In a camp governed by the military discipline was a constant, which included that of dress. The men were expected to wear uniforms and keep clean quarters. Of course the men needed reminders. At time when the concern of cleanliness became an issue an article would run in any of the camp papers addressing what the concern was and how to fix them. The CCC rarely had the sense of reprimand, but tended to focus on advisement instead. Advisement was the best approach especially with speech. The men came from all walks of life, which meant that they had all sorts of slang speech. The CCC knew that the importance of proper speech was just as important for a job interview as it was to present an heir of education and social status. The young men had to learn to

speak and address members of their aspired class. Upward mobility required the young men to behave and speak in the fashion of the positions wanted. Each of the three companies addressed the importance of proper speech. How a man dressed was also a concern especially for the job hunting community. Each of these aspects were important to bring a presence of education to a job interview for the skilled worker but also to be role models as a middle class American citizens. It was not only their duty to themselves to make these personal improvements but also a duty to their country as Americans. As America slowly inched its way toward war, the CCC found that their duty as Americans required more than just personal improvement.



## CHAPTER 4

### FIRST AID AND MILITARY PREPAREDNESS

Ever since the inception until it was discontinued in 1942 the CCC was under criticism for its administration under the supervision of the military. The CCC at its core was not a military program but found itself under the rule of the military program for administration and camp supervision. As time progressed and the nation grew closer to war that would come in 1941, a trend emerged in the CCC camps to introduce basic, non-combat, military training courses. These courses usually involved the already popular vocational programs and added additional course work relevant to military preparedness. These courses were not mandatory and offered in tandem with existing ones. The CCC was no different than other New Deal works programs.

The CCC evolved much in the same way as its companions in the Public Works sphere. A trend emerged as the time between when the United States declared war and inception of the CCC narrowed. In the late 1930s and early 1940 camps started to voluntarily provide military training through their vocational programs. A non-mandatory training, but one that was encouraged from the director of the CCC himself. The courses included basic woodworking and engine mechanics to tank maintenance with some companies.

This chapter will look into the transformation of the education program of the CCC once military preparedness courses were implemented. Camps varied on their take

on military preparedness. Some camps implemented their programs sooner than others. How the already established vocational courses were adapted to the military preparation will be the primary focus. The chapter will also study how the mission of the CCC changed with the implemented military courses.

The sentiment among most of the enrollees was not favorable toward the military, specifically military training. Most joined with the understanding that any training given by the military oversight of the camps would be minimal.<sup>1</sup> One enrollee, Fred Nevin, from Company 1370 of Virginia stood apart from his comrades. In an editorial he published in the camp newspaper he wrote a brief synopsis of the armed forces in America and why he felt it would be beneficial for the men in the camp to have basic training. The editorial read,

Those who are very strongly against any thing that pertains to war in the nature of arms, drills, etc. give as their argument that it will in time lead to where the U.S. will be as certain powers of our European friends. By that I mean a certain part of the young men of the country will be forced to have some military training regardless of whether they are in school or not.

He went on to state,

But this is beside the main issue whether the training will benefit the CCC. I believe military training will help the CCC boys, since a great many of them haven't had the privilege of getting it heretofore. It will teach them the facts about the Army in regard to discipline and other vital issues that otherwise they would never learn.<sup>2</sup>

The sentiment that Nevin conveyed was not one shared by all. By 1936 people in America were aware of the situation that was slowly developing in Europe and wanted

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<sup>1</sup> Calvin Gower, "The Civilian Conservation Corps and American Education: Threat to Local Control?," *History of Education Quarterly* 7, no 1 (Spring 1967) 58

<sup>2</sup> Fred M. Nevin, "Military Training for the CCC," *Lucky 13*, August 1936

nothing to do with it. Nevin understood the prevailing sentiment and attempted to pass on the idea that there was more to military training than just combat readiness. The CCC kept a fairly strict schedule daily and were quartered in barracks like any military base. At that time no training had been set in motion for Company 1370 or the CCC. That change would not come for some years down the road.

One of the courses that stood apart from the rest was First Aid. At first the course was offered and mandatory due to regulation for those who were truck drivers for the CCC. The course was one that first stood as a requirement and quickly gained popularity. Fortunately for the army it was also a very useful skill to have on hand. The Virginia Company followed that trend and began offering the course more regularly.

The course given during the winter months was very actively attended and some thirty odd received certificates. Since then several new ratings have been made and new truck drivers appointed. Regulations state that these men must have First Aid Certificates. The class, however, will not be limited to these men alone but any enrollees desiring to do so can attend.

Large industries now are giving special attention to Safety and First Aid. A certificate will come in very handy some day when applying for a job in the outside world. They are good for three years.<sup>3</sup>

The growing popularity initially was tied to just those who had a specific job, such as driving heavy machinery; however, the article offered a new avenue of opportunities. Job opportunities were more obtainable to those who possessed one of the three year First Aid certificates. It also became an appealing skill to have for those who would eventually pursue time in the military and help prepare them for combat. It was among

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<sup>3</sup> "First Aid Class to be Started Again," *Lucky 13*, May 1938

these types of courses that would eventually be introduced as non-combat military courses, during this time they remained as time fillers and job enhancers.

Due to consistent popularity the First Aid course continued on into 1939 and beyond. In August of 1939 another round of First Aid was offered to the company and was greeted with enthusiasm. The new round of courses increased the mandatory spread to include all administrative personnel in the camps along with all truck drivers. An article ran that month that again encouraged the benefits included with earning a First Aid certificate.

Quite a number of industries now require first aid cards for new employees. Also, too, the great number of motor vehicles on the roads create far too often a need for immediate first aid from someone who knows how. You never know when you might be in a wreck yourself or come up on one. If you have the first aid training this course represents you may be the means of saving your own life or that of some other [commuter].<sup>4</sup>

With the offer of a new edition of the First Aid course came a new sales pitch. Before the First Aid course was marketed as the means to become more appealing to jobs especially in industry. Now the terms of safety were a top the sales strategy. The ability to save a life was the moral sales pitch for that particular round of course offerings. It was the ability to save a life that would be the more advantageous purpose for the course and for the future of these men.

By the time the offering of the non-combat courses were being introduced the camp began a transition to a new location. Non-combat courses involved skills and occupations that were involved in military service but would not involve the use of

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<sup>4</sup> "First Aid to be organized," *Lucky 13*, October 1939

weapons or tactics training. The newspaper as the main source of new information going into the camp became sparse and then nonexistent. By the end of 1941 and 1942 the company and the CCC in general were discontinued by the government. The company in Arkansas was a different case entirely. Their resources continued through the early 1940s and provided information on the new non-combat courses that would be offered.

Company 1708 from Arkansas also had a frequent and popular First Aid program like their counterparts in Virginia. The company found great success with a large enrollment, even greater than that of Company 1370. An article from their camp newspaper in 1938 reported,

All but three of the new men are enrolled in the First Aid class this number with sox old men brings the Doctor's class to near forty. Dr. Roberts has worked for past three weeks on an intensive outline for the First Aid course. The course should be very interesting and with the Doctor's gift of witticism the class should show much progress and will lack the dryness that sometimes has a tendency to creep in a class of this kind.<sup>5</sup>

The article hinted at the fact that the First Aid courses popularity was not merely for the content as much as the teacher. Nevertheless the class managed to enroll all but three of the incoming enrollees. The trend had consistently been upward with enrollment, however, they

War broke out in 1941 after the attack on Pearl Harbor but the notion that war was well on its way existed years prior. In 1938, in commemoration of the final armistice of the first Great War, the camp newspaper of Company 1708 published an article which explained how WWI came to an end. The article came with a sentiment that even though

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<sup>5</sup> "Education," *Forest Trails*, October 1938

the last war ended almost twenty years prior, another was looming on the horizon. The article concluded, "The Germans are persecuting the Jewish people and something should be done about it, but that would be a good cause to start another war. The World War was said to be a war to end wars, but avoiding another war seems almost impossible."<sup>6</sup> Actual declaration of war was three years in the future but the conclusion of the article found that American's were well aware of the likelihood of the US involvement in Europe's plight. Given that even regular men such as these were aware of the impending war on the horizon, the government was even more alert to the same notion. That notion would be the driving force for what would become the practice of implementing non-combat vocational options for the CCC educational program.

First move toward the non-combat courses was in June of 1940 when an article ran in the camp newspaper on the request given by the national CCC Director for tanks. The article spoke to the CCC as a whole and not specifically toward Company 1708; nevertheless, it played a role in the initiation of the future implementation of similar courses in the company. The article ran,

Director James J McEntee has asked of the War Department to provide the CCC with Army tanks to the extent of one for each camp and automotive repair center. They would be used, the director pointed out, not for combat training of enrollees but to afford them mechanical training in maintenance and operation. Enrollees who volunteer for such training and become proficient will, of course, have an opportunity of similar work in the Army should they desire to enlist or be drafted in event of war. In the camps, however, training would be restricted to the mechanics of building, repair and operation.

The last part of the article included how the company would use the program,

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<sup>6</sup> "Armistice," *Forest Trails*, November 1938

We feel that should this course and others designed to aid the preparedness program be instituted all of our qualified instructors and enrollees would join the venture 100%. Our contemplated new program at the new camp at Mulberry will stress vocational courses to the extent that we plan to do all in our power to have a work shop second to none in the district.<sup>7</sup>

The first section was from a national CCC newspaper *Happy Days*. McEntee made it clear that there that no combat training would come from the tanks presence in the camps, but war preparation was clearly the goal if not clearly stated. The article also made clear that those who participated were almost guaranteed a job with the Army following their service in the CCC. The enticement of a job of any sort would be enough for most to jump on board.

The vocational courses that existed prior to the announcement were created for the sole purpose of preparation for civilian life following the stint in the CCC. June signified the transition. Company 1708 responded with the last half of the article. The company justified their support that such a course would boost their overall expertise within their vocational courses. The complete support offered by the company's response was not just company administration agreeing with their superiors. A great level of patriotism existed in the country at this time and these men already owned their future to the success of the CCC. The first step of the military implementation to the education program started on the national level but would continue through these companies.

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<sup>7</sup> "McEntee Asks Tanks for Training," *Forest Trails*, June 1940. Includes both quotes from paragraph.

The second development came with the compulsory addition of the First Aid course to those junior enrollees. The addition came within four months of the request for tanks for the purpose of training with repair and use. The request for the addition of the mandatory level, much like the tank request, came from the highest authority in the CCC James McEntee. For the past six years the course was never compulsory for any member of the company. The only real change was the mandatory addition of officers, which was a logical move for administrative level positions. The article in the camp newspaper on the development read,

Instruction in First Aid is made compulsory for all junior enrollees in the CCC by regulations approved during the week by Director James J. McEntee and sent to the field by War Department.

The War Department is charged with instituting "a suitable course in First Aid" so that all enrollees may have added training heretofore required only of leaders and assistant leaders and certain special job enrollees.

First Aid instructions have been a voluntary training course in the Camp for several years. To date more than 300,000 enrollees have earned American Red Cross First Aid certificates for completing such courses.<sup>8</sup>

The article issued no evidence for the need of a compulsory First Aid course for the enrollees, but the article began with the responsibility for organizing the project to the War Department. The "suitable course" the War Department was in charge of likely had ties to the prior executive move to institute a CCC wide program with the tanks. Typically each camp changed their own education and vocational needs to suit the enrollees in their companies; however, two program wide changes such as these were the exception to the rule.

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<sup>8</sup> "First Aid to be Compulsory to All Juniors," *Shore Lakes Journal*, September 1940



The first suggestion for the non-combat courses came for the Arkansas area came from the annual Arkansas Teachers Association meeting. During that meeting one presenter, Colonel Graham gave a presentation on ability to adjust current CCC educational programming for non-combat military training. The presentation was summarized as such,

At the close of Colonel Graham's address, Mr. Jacobus, District Educational Advisor, took up the survey of the individual Camps represented to determine insofar as possible the training each Adviser thought his camp best fitted to carry on. our camp, Co. 1708 by virtue of the work we are doing seems best fitted for Concrete Construction, Heavy Machine Operation, etc. However, regardless of the type of training the District Commander or other officials sees fit to assign to us, we will do our best to do that particular training well and up to standard. We feel that the proper authorities at Headquarters know best where we belong.<sup>9</sup>

After hinting at the non-combat courses for so long, the Arkansas conference brought to light for the first time that these courses were to become a reality. One fact that stood out among the rest was the customization of the program among the different camps based on existing vocational work. The conference did not indicate that the program was implemented but the information gathered by the survey gave the notion that implementation was close.

Actual implementation came for Company 1708 in January of 1941 when the first set of courses, called "A" courses were activated. A special session of the Educational Advisors was called in January to begin implementation of National Defense Courses. The first set of courses included,

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<sup>9</sup> "Education," *Shore Lakes Journal*, November 1940.

A-1 Operation, care, and repair of tractors, trucks, and automobiles (both gas and diesel engines).

A-2 Metal work, simple welds, tempering, drilling, shaping and machinery repair

A-3 Woodworking

A-4 Elementary electricity

The article that ran on the subject in the camp paper went on to state, "Mr. Smith and MR. C.R. Wilkey heads of Rural and Non-Rural Youth Vocational Education of Defense Workers in Arkansas, gave a very complete and interesting summary of how to set up these courses and properly carried out. Mr. Smith emphatically expressed his desire of 100% cooperation with the CCC in setting up and perpetuating these National Defense Training Courses."<sup>10</sup> The apparent rapid transition and support of the defense courses was drastic from those who staunchly opposed military oversight in basic CCC actions. The sense of national security threats from Europe had the American government under enough pressure that even civilian programs such as the CCC were to become war ready.

The last real boost for the National Defense programs, or non-combat courses, was in January of 1942 following the event of Pearl Harbor. The courses gained a great deal of speed and enrollment continued to go up steadily for the A-1 and A-3 courses. The mechanics related defense courses received a specific boost, "About \$500 worth of National Defense Equipment was received this month. Among the equipment received for the Mechanic class were; a fender repair set, tension wrench, floor jack, bushing

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<sup>10</sup> "Education," *Shores Lake Journal*, January 1941. Citation includes both quotations. The breath and times of each of the National Defense courses appeared in the next month's issue. The article also covered the amount of time invested in each course or hours in a day.

grinder, armature growler, etc, and several other pieces of necessary equipment."<sup>11</sup> The article became the last mentioning of the National Defense courses before the paper was discontinued. Never before had classes received so much help from the government to fund and supply vocational courses like these. It had become clear that the real purpose of the CCC was over and National Defense had become paramount. It was not long after that issue that the CCC was discontinued in favor of the war effort.

All companies throughout the United States were following the same suit like Virginia and Arkansas. In the Midwest the Nebraska Company 2732 found itself in the midst of instituting similar National Defense courses. In May 1940 the first article ran in the camp newspaper which suggested a change was on the way for inclusion into national defense. The camp newspaper ran an article that came from the national CCC newspaper "Happy Days." The article explained the proposition before congress,

All attempts to inject military training in CCC camps in the past have failed of any great consideration. Indications now are that there is but little more sentiment for it at this time. Many in Washington think the CCC can do as much if not more in national defense through the training of enrollees in many of the trades and special jobs required in any military organization. Included in the group are such things as auto mechanics and truck driving, short wave radio, first aid, aviation mechanics, and the like.<sup>12</sup>

The article presented for the first time the relationship the government hoped to achieve between the CCC and national defense. The plans instituted in the other two camps, Arkansas especially, focused on similar trades as expressed in the syndicated article. Also for the first time the idea that the First Aid course might come into play as

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<sup>11</sup> "Education," *Shore Lakes Journal*, January 1942

<sup>12</sup> "CCC Likely to be Included in Plans for Devised for Defense," *The Bow Blower*, May 1940.

preparation for national defense. Company 2732 had First Aid courses instituted but encouraged no greater focus upon them than any of their other courses. Information from the Nebraska Company combined with the other two show that the trend toward national defense was headed to every CCC camp eventually.

The next month provided concrete evidence that implementation was in the works to institute the defense programs for the CCC. However the program was careful to keep the terms national defense and military training separate. The article that ran in the June issue spoke to the national defense courses and swiftly denied they included military training.

There will be no "military training" in the CCC camps but there will be extensive training in those skills employed in regular conservation work and CCC maintenance which are necessary to any army in time of war, if actions of Congress and other Government officials in Washington during the past week are indicative of the probable use of the CCC in the general national defense program.

A proposal to institute voluntary military training in the CCC was voted down in the Senate. The Byrnes amendment to the relief bill, providing for training in road and bridge building, cooking, automotive mechanics, radio, photography, first aid and similar skills as part of CCC work probably will be enacted within the coming week.<sup>13</sup>

The government tried to keep unrest at bay by making sure the program was national defense only not military training. To them language made the difference, one called for precaution while the other aggression. For many the initial transition to military life would be much like CCC life. However, the men were promised upon their enrollment into the CCC that the purpose of the program was for conservation and education of these

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<sup>13</sup> "CCC Set to Launch Greatest Vocation Training Program," *The Bow Blower*, June 1940.

young men. Even though the article stated "there will be extensive training in those skills employed in regular conservation work" the real message was clear: the U.S wanted to begin preparation for war.

Company 2732 would make one of its final transitions to the defense program in November. Two changes in the educational programming took Company 2732 into a closer working relationship with the defense program. First the company began placing more stress on certain courses which were more closely tied to the defense training than others. An article ran in October on the change,

In line with national defense needs additional stress is being placed upon subjects and skills which have been declared vital by high governmental officials in the camp training program. While the camp has received no word as to exactly what it wanted the camp educational committee has gone ahead and worked out plans for a much improved course in auto mechanics and carpentry, and have added a course in machine shop practice to the schedule.<sup>14</sup>

The article went on to specifically denote the teachers and projects of each of the three programs mentioned. The final plans were laid for the shift in programming with the CCC. Company 2732 may have still been offering the same courses as before for vocational purposes, but they were intended now to train these men for the war they felt was well on the way and not focus on preparation for a future beyond the CCC, devoid of war

The second instituted change was in the First Aid course. Much like in the Arkansas company, Company 2732 instituted the First Aid class be mandatory for all

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<sup>14</sup> "National Defense Subjects Stressed in Training Program," *The Bow Blower*, October 1940.

enrollees. No doubt in preparation for national defense much like their vocational course counterparts. An article in the same October issue provided the details for the transition,

In compliance with orders received from District Headquarters, it will be necessary for all enrollees of Company 2732 to possess a First Aid card, showing that he has passed the standard course of First Aid. It is felt everyone should know at least the fundamentals of first aid so all CCC enrollees in the United States camps hereafter must acquire first aid cards. Previously only rated men, acting assistants, and truck drivers were required to take the first aid course.<sup>15</sup>

The article went on to detail times, places, and groupings to accommodate the rest of the enrollees who had not yet completed the First Aid course. A change in the verbiage of the introduction of the changes in these course also stood out. The article that ran in the newspaper sounded more of a declaration or mandate than an informative article on changes. That too signified that a real shift was in progress. Company 2732 had become the training ground for what would be the soldiers for WWII.

When the CCC was created one of the chief concerns was that the men would not be made to serve the military or receive military training. The CCC was under the administration, in part, by the Army but only to oversee the camps and keep discipline. That balanced existed for many years but as 1940 approached the CCC camps found that their purpose in the Corps would change. An emphasis on certain program signified that the administration of the CCC desired a certain level of military readiness from the CCC. It was never termed as such, Director McEntee stated that the change was for national defense. The vocational programs and the First Aid course were among those where the greatest change was instituted.

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<sup>15</sup> "All Enrollees Must Hold First Aid Cards," *The Bow Blower*, October 1940.

All three companies found that First Aid showed the first signs of military readiness. All three camps found that First Aid class went from a class mandatory for only truck drivers to mandatory for all enrollees. The shift steadily increased as the years neared that of 1941. For most the First Aid course was popular already by enrollees. The course was even marketed in the Arkansas Company as a means to be more appealing to potential employers. However as the Company 2732 of Nebraska showed, the implementation of mandatory First Aid was ideal for national defense. That was the same reason given for the adaptation of vocational courses.

The companies from Arkansas and Nebraska saw the greatest change in their vocation programs. As the change in decades occurred in 1940 both companies found that an emphasis to offer voluntary national defense courses was mounting. The companies even found that Director McEntee wanted to provide tanks to all camps so that the mechanics courses would be aware of how to repair and operate them. Both companies began instituting voluntary National Defense programs by 1940. The company from Arkansas set up a specific program especially for programs such as mechanics and woodworking. In the Nebraska Company they found a more overall change in their vocational program. Administration hoped that each camp would create their national defense programs to whichever vocational program was their strong suit.

The initial purpose of the CCC was to provide a future for the men, not only a future, a means to create their own future. A program such as the CCC found great benefit from being administered by the Army, mostly by keeping discipline and order.

Ever since the inception of the program did the administration or the enrollees think they would ever have military training. Nor should they have, however, the transparency on the reasons why the CCC shifted toward that of military readiness was hidden behind the words "national defense." America knew that war was coming by the end of the 1930s and that whether or not the transition of programs like the CCC toward military readiness was one of the interpretations the CCC has gained.



## CONCLUSION

The Great Depression proved to be disaster and a challenge unlike the United States had ever witnessed to that point. People from all walks of life and all classes were touched by the devastating effects of the depression but some were hit harder than others. Members of the working class prior to the depression were already having a hard time. The answers to their plight came from the highest levels of the United States, the President. Under President Franklin Roosevelt the New Deal was established which created aid programs for many aspects of the broken economy. Among them was the work program the Civilian Conservation Corps.

The CCC was created for the purpose of putting the young working class men back to work, while also improving the status of the countries natural settings through conservation techniques. Not long after the inception of the CCC program did one of the most important aspects of the CCC become realized. In November of 1933 the CCC established the beginning of an education program that would span the entire term of the program until its discontinuance in 1942. The education program sought to help the youth in the camp gain a foothold for their futures, specifically training them to move out of the working class lives they had known to the more profitable and powerful middle class. The education program was implemented in a variety of ways.

First the education had a focus on the academic. Courses were instituted to help the young men achieve basic education, which for some meant a eighth grade certificate and others a high school diploma. The Corps knew that a degree of some sort would

provide evidence of their education level and become a block in the foundation for their future. The academic program, as well as other aspects, created a democratically accessible program and encouraged anyone to pursue any and all courses they desired. The academic program had many tools at their disposal. The main focus laid with the course work.

Other tools utilized were the library and the correspondence courses. The correspondence courses allowed for enrollees to study through other institutions to gain classes and knowledge in areas that the CCC just could not afford or they did not have the personal to create the necessary course work. Another example of creating any and all possibilities to encourage the men to move up in the world. Correspondence courses were either working relationships with high schools for diplomas or colleges for achieve the first steps towards a diploma or certificate. The library was also a useful tool to promote self education or to supplement the academic course areas where the courses could not. All were promoted as a means to give the enrollees every available opportunity. The vocational aspects of the education program utilized much of the same tools.

The vocational and job aspects of the CCC provided tools necessary to assist with skills directly associated with certain occupations or trades. The vocational program focused on course work as well in a variety of trade work, blue and white collar. Vocational work also found success with on the job training, which encouraged the instructors to find ways to associate the youth directly with people working in those jobs.

On the job training proved to be one of the most successful means for the men to gain practical experience to present to their future employers. The library also provided literature and film to assist the men with their course work. It also provided extra material in classes not offered. Work in the middle class required higher levels of skill than the basic labor jobs found for most working class men. The CCC promoted a new set of skills necessary for a new lifestyle.

Other skills provided the youth of the camp did not come from courses but from camp leadership and fellow enrollees. Young men of the camp were just coming to adulthood and others still were unprepared for the everyday life skills to be a part of the middle class that the CCC wanted to prepare them for. Men of the camp learned of proper speech technique from newspaper articles on the subjects written by their friends in the camp. Other important lessons found in a similar fashion were methods of dress and manors. These men were not devoid of these aspects but the CCC offered a refresher.

Given their age, many of these men were also in search of their better halves. The CCC provided counseling in the ways of women. The newspaper also provided options for these men as well. Love advice columns were regular in camps in all regions. The aspects of love dwelled on these men's minds a great deal. Men of the age of the camp enrollees were typically finding wives and creating their futures with families and housing. The depression took that freedom from them when making money to scrape by

become more important. To create new middle class families the CCC tried to assist with the youth with their love lives as well.

As the year passed the CCC became to change shape. The ides of war were drawing ever closer to the United States. Many did not want involvement. People in the US feared from the beginning that the CCC was to become a training ground for the military. The reason for that fear lay in the Army having hold of the administration of the camps. For the majority of the life of the CCC that fear was not realized. As the years closed in the 1940s the camps began instituting free-will non-combat military training. The non-combat courses were all skills necessary outside of physical conditioning and weapons training. Courses included woodworking, automotive, and road construction to name a few. These courses brought the CCC away from their original intentions. As the conflict in Europe grew ever closer in 1940 the courses and training continued and the last shift occurred after the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

Despite the shift at the end of the life of the CCC the original purpose had time to impact the men of the program. The academic and vocational courses combined offered an opportunity not provided the young men in their lives before. From the CCC emerged a legacy of building up not only the forests and wildlife but also of democratic uplift for the working classes.

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