

12-06  
Museum

# Nuggets from the Past

By Norman McLeod

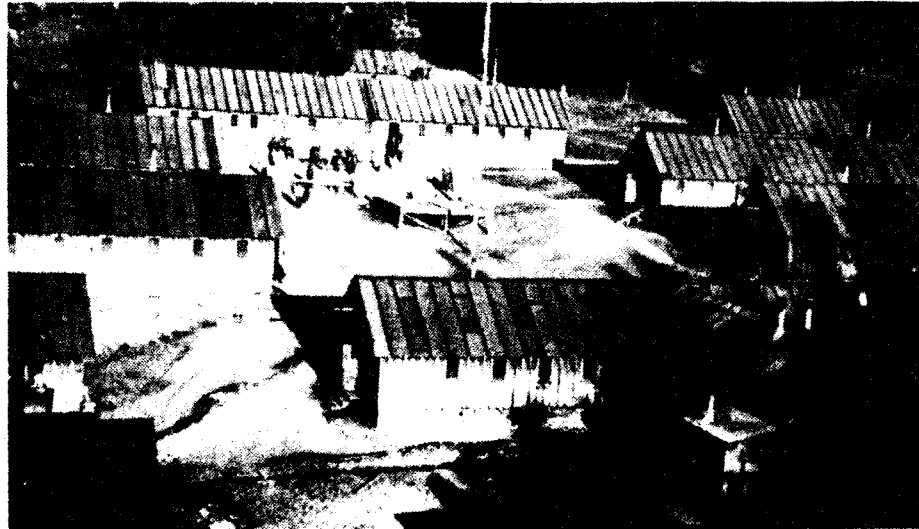


Photo courtesy of Albert Richter

'Good old Camp Bradley'

## Boys enter CCC, exit as men

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was hailed as probably the best of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal programs.

Affectionately known as "Roosevelt's Tree Army," it was initiated in 1933 and lasted until 1942. The primary aim was to take idle youths off city streets and farms during the Great Depression and give them useful jobs throughout the nation.

CCC camps were erected in every state. Millions of enrollees lived in barracks - military style. Any single camp might accommodate between 300 and 400 men. There was loose discipline, good food and an esprit de corps that accomplished much in the way of reforestation, road and dam building. In fact, anything that needed fixing or constructing on the rural side of America.

In 1935, at the age of 18, I joined the CCC in Minnesota. I served one term - or six months. The pay was \$30 a month, \$25 of which was sent home to my parents. It has truly been said that many a boy went in the CCC and came out a man.

When the program ended in 1942, most enrollees either were drafted in the military or volunteered to serve in World War II.

There were several camps located on the Foresthill Divide, one in Foresthill itself. That was Camp Bradley, situated on the south side of today's Red Rock Drive. It was an average size camp, comprised of at least seven large, wooden buildings - including a huge mess hall.

The main entrance was graced with a large, square archway formed by three sizable trimmed tree trunks - or poles - two vertical, and one horizontal at the top.

In 1986, I contacted one of this camp's alumni. Albert Richter, of Forestville, N.Y., wrote back as follows:

"In 1935, Foresthill was a small town. Our camp was just a short way from McKeon Road. As I recall, a few buildings stood there. Also a post office. Some of the boys got their mail from McKeon Post Office.

"We used to go into Auburn on Saturday nights, take in a picture show, and - of course - raise a little hell. We didn't go to Foresthill very often because there wasn't much to go there for.

"When we were on our good behavior, we were treated OK. Auburn was a good-sized town. Plenty to see and do there. We visited Foresthill in 1983, and it had grown

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considerably in 50 years.

"I want to ask you if you know a man by the name of Charlie Finning? He worked with us as a forester. I visited with him in 1983 ... he didn't remember me. I thought a lot of Charlie; he was our group leader. All of our group liked him. He didn't look very good when I was there. Too bad his wife passed away. That leaves him all alone.

"As I recall, Foresthill did put on two or three dances for us. We also had a baseball and basketball team. We traveled all over, playing different teams. Our team ended up in first place."

Another ex-member of Camp Bradley is Roy W. Pedigo of Leavenworth, Wash., who, as an original member, took part in erecting the camp.

"We hauled all the prefab sections and all the thousands of pieces from the railhead in Auburn to the camp's location," he wrote in 1991. "You could not see the camp from the road because of the trees (this was before Red Rock Drive). On the south side of camp was the canyon that I believe was the Rubicon River."

"It took us quite a long time putting the camp together. I guess you could find an old timer around there that could show you the location. I was back there once years later with my family. I think there was a large sawmill at the site of the camp then."

I took his suggestions and did locate one old timer. It was the late Bill Nichols.

"Most of our work consisted of road construction," he goes on. "We had to fight a few fires. One I remember quite vividly when we were at the Greek Store side camp. We left camp late at night and traveled over to what was then Highway 40, then west to a community near the the railroad (Colfax?)."

"The fire was started from a piece of a railcar brake shoe flying into the brush. Our truck didn't have a cover over the back so we were exposed to the cold air. We got some hot coffee as soon as we got to camp, but I was shaking so bad I spilled most of it on my hands and didn't even feel it."

Both men have since passed away. We shall probably not obtain any further recollections of Camp Bradley - an episode in history of which its members may be proud.

We thank Albert Richter for furnishing the photo of Camp Bradley.