



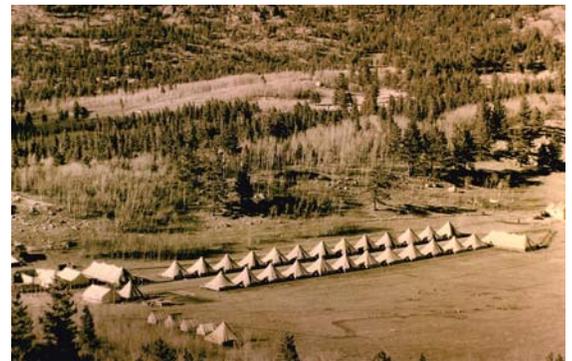
# Social Conservation in the CCC

## The Question: What was the social benefit of the Civilian Conservation Corps?

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) created in 1933 by President Franklin Roosevelt as part of New Deal legislation is often championed as a beneficial program that provided work and a pay check for young men during the Great Depression while also preserving our natural surroundings. This simplified view of the CCC alludes to the two main goals of the CCC: social and natural conservation. While natural conservation was a goal with concrete results, social conservation had less obvious results. The aim of social conservation was to transform jobless, possibly reckless boys into hardworking men.

## The Project: Investigate the social atmosphere of the CCC through the use of historical and contemporary written sources.

Historian Julia Brock of Florida State University scoured numerous sources to determine the social atmosphere in the park's six CCC camps. Historical sources included both federal and state archived records, camp newsletters written and published by the CCC camp enrollees and administrators, local and regional newspapers, and various books and articles written and published during the CCC years. She also consulted contemporary secondary sources.



Many CCC enrollees lived in "tent cities."

## The Results: Social conservation was achieved in the CCC through discipline, hard work, education, and socialization, which reflected mid-20th century middle class social values.

The idea of social conservation was at the core of the CCC affecting the daily lives of each of the enrollees. Supervisors tightly scheduled each day discouraging deviant behavior. Supervisors emphasized punctuality, cleanliness, and order. Infractions could result in termination of enrollment. Administrators believed that hard work would teach the men to enjoy working hard and earning their way.

Life at camp, however, was not all work and rules. Enrollees learned vocational skills that would help them to get a job when their time in the CCC was over. Training in civic life was often mandatory and taught the men the role of government and how to become ideal citizens: to value obedience and duty. Various influences worked towards socializing the men to conform to middle class values. The park itself, as a place for middle class visitors to vacation and recreate, projected the value of recreation onto the enrollees. The tourist towns of Estes Park and, to some extent Grand Lake, encouraged consumption and, with their monthly paychecks, five dollars of which they got to keep and \$25 which was sent home, the men acquired consumerism as a value. A final form of socialization was the newsletters written and published by the enrollees. Articles published in these camp newspapers made it clear that whoever deviated from gender norms would be singled out and humiliated. This socialized the men to value masculinity. Preservation of the nation's natural areas was not the only goal of the CCC. The corps was designed to save the men from corruption and turn them into good, honest, breadwinners, and conforming citizens.



CCC boys received room and board, plus a \$30 check each month.