



Forest Soldiers of the Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest
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Company 650 – CAMP STAR LAKE; Star Lake, WI

The Star Lake CCC Camp originated at Fort Sheridan, Illinois on June 8, 1933, with a strength of 185 MEN. Three men, Joseph Perlberg, Tom Patton and Albert Hendricks, who were part of this first company, are still with Star Lake.

During those exciting days at Fort Sheridan, the company was known as 650-C. Capt. O'Conner was the first commanding officer. At first, orders came through to get ready to leave for Marengo, Wisconsin. Everything was packed and ready to go when the orders were changed. On June 22, they finally left for Gilmanton, Wisconsin.

From the depot to the camp at Gilmanton, the men were transported in rented cattle trucks. This was a new experience especially for the boys from the city. The new camp was located in a beautiful grove of pines. Here, under the direction of First Lieut. McCartney, a tent home was quickly established. The men worked steadily for a week picking up pine cones. At this time First Lieut. T. A. Rathje joined the company for what proved to be nearly a two-year stay.

The work at Gilmantown, was important soil conservation work, building dams and filling in gulleys. The location was in one of the worst eroded areas of Wisconsin. The men were proud to hear, a year later, that in spite of severe storms, high water, and floods, that only one dam was washed out.

They lived in tents up until two weeks before Thanksgiving. The temperature averaged 10 degrees above zero. Finally, it became so cold that the company was moved into a vacant canning factory at the nearby town of Mondovi. Several days before Thanksgiving, orders came through transferring them to Star Lake, Wisconsin.

Thanksgiving Day, 1933, will long be remembered by the Star Lake men. They worked hard all day digging up frozen ground and putting in part of the water works. But they had an enjoyable dinner prepared by the faithful cooks, who wouldn't let a 200-mile trip interfere with their plans for a good Thanksgiving dinner.

During the winter, First Lieut. T. A. Rathje became commanding officer, a position he held until the spring of 1935.

During the year of 1934, Star Lake men built up a splendid reputation for work accomplished in the field. They were one of the outstanding camps in the state. The camp itself received honorable mention as one of the neatest and cleanest of the Sixth Corps Area. It was the one camp of Northern Wisconsin that competed in the final inspection by Sixth Corps officials.

In the spring of 1935, Capt. Albert C. Wolfe assumed command. By this time only twenty of the original men were left in the company. During this year the men maintained the same high standard of work in the field and kept the camp in excellent condition. First Lieut. R. A. Blakney assumed command for a short time in the fall of 1935, followed by First Lieut. N. J. Bakke, who took over the company and held it up to the present time, May, 1937.

The forestry department, under the direction of Superintendent Paul R. Smith, cooperated by landscaping and improving the grounds, making the camp a comfortable home.

The first part of 1937 was a busy one for all. With a smaller enrollment, the men were busy in the field and were busy improving all departments of the camp. Star Lake was now listed as an excellent camp.

In May 1937, orders were received to disband the company by June 1st.

Company 1601, S-74, CAMP CRYSTAL (White Sand Lake) Star Lake, Wisconsin

Company 1601, CCC Camp Crystal Lake, S-74, Star Lake, Wisconsin, was established on June 16, 1933. Originally intended to be established on Crystal Lake, the camp site was changed to White Sand Lake, and here the tents were set up. The first C.O. was Capt. J. L. Murphy, Second Inf., U.S.A. Successive company commanders after Captain Murphy continued the improvement of the camp. Capt. George B. Lowe and First Lieut. William H. Kelly were in command for the longest periods of time and their terms of office were marked by numerous improvements in buildings and physical facilities in and about camp.

The location of the camp in the Northern State Forest has determined the nature of its work. Six miles from the forestry headquarters and forest nursery at Trout Lake, the men have spent a large part of their time in this work.

The nursery has been enlarged since inception of the CCC, and now turns out approximately 12,000,000 trees annually for planting. The enrollees also improved the forest headquarters including the construction of several large buildings and enlargement of existing ones.

Considerable work has been done toward improving the public camp sites in the forest; this includes the construction of toilet buildings, fireplaces, shelters, and diving towers.

The truck trail projects within the area are practically completed. A large dam and fist hatchery, the second built by this camp, was begun in the fall of 1936, and is now completed and in operation. Preliminary surveys are being made on a large rearing pond for pike.

In the fall of 1936, this camp surveyed, brushed, and posted the boundaries of a large game refuge. A project of mapping and control of white pine blister rust has been under way since this camp was established.

Most important, perhaps of all activities, fighting forest fires has taken up many man-days. Numerous small fires have been put out and fortunately no large ones have burned in this area. Fire equipment is in readiness, and a crew is available at all times. Three fire towers are manned by this camp and cabins are being built at the towers. In winter a small crew looks after the feeding of game birds and animals. Another crew works at lake improvement. Other crews work at fire hazard reduction and timber stand improvement, of which there is a vast amount to be done.

(Source: Sparta District, Sixth Corps Area, 1937.)

Star Lake Meteor (Company Newsletter) June 27, 1936

FORESTRY: CCC COOPERATES WITH WPA

For the first time in its history, Star Lake is cooperating with another Federal emergency agency, working on the Palmer Lake Road at the same time as the W.P.A. The road is being cleared by the W.P.A. and the construction is being done by the Star Lake Camp S-92. Two Emergency Conservation Work (E.C.W.) foremen, two CAT drivers, two truck drivers and one enrolled leader are assigned to this project from Star Lake Camp. Two dump trucks, one bull-dozer, and a *fresno were obtained from the Antigo warehouse E.C.W. for the use of our camp while working on this project. The 50 Cat and the 35 CAT are both stationed at Palmer Lake.

W.P.A. laborers are sheltered and fed in the Transient Camp at Palmer Lake; enrollees from Star Lake also eat and sleep in the Transient Camp.

* a FRESNO is a steel trowel pulled by a grader to smooth out concrete.

FORESTRY: CAMP SENDS MEN TO PARK FALLS

Monday evening, June 29, this camp sent four truck-loads of men to Park Falls to listen to a lecture given by Mr. Wheeler, Chief lecturer for the U. S. Forest Service. Mr. Wheeler has been with the Forest Service for thirty years and is now lecturing from six to eight camps each day. About five hundred men attend the morning lectures. Two other camps besides Star Lake attended the evening lecture.

Mr. Wheeler began his talk with a discussion of the uses of timber in some form from the cradle to the coffin. Timber from the National Forests is sold by contract under very strict supervision. Money received from the sale of timber and for grazing rights in National Forests goes to the National Treasury and is turned back to the districts from which it was received for the most part. Roads, rural schools, fire protection, and administration costs are paid for from these funds.

Watershed protection, proper use of land, soil erosion, game management, development of recreational areas and tree planting occupied the remainder of the lecture which was illustrated with colored lantern slides.

All enrollees of the CCC should realize that they are being of service to the country. Service should be the watchword of every enrollee. The value of this service can be seen especially when we realize how fire costs have been reduced. Fires were held to a total of 1,298 acres in Wisconsin during the season of 1935. That this figure is much smaller than any previous season is needless to say.

FIRE CREW ACTS QUICKLY

A good example of quick action by the fire crew was the fourth fire call received by the crew this season. A fire apparently started by a cigarette thrown by the roadside by some careless motorist was reported to the forestry office by a tourist. The fire crew hurried to the scene from the supper table and the area burned was held to one fortieth of an acre.

Brushing has been nearly completed on the new park road to Conover. Moving of dirt is being held up because Camp Star Lake's machinery is still in use at Palmer Lake. The latter being a W.P.A. job.

Forestry News: Paul R. Smith, Superintendent; July 16, 1935

NORTHERN WISCONSIN BEING REBUILT: Star Lake CCC Camp Reforesting and Conserving Wild Life of the Northern State Forest

Star Lake, Wis. ---The Civilian Conservation Corps men of the Star Lake State Emergency Conservation Work Camp have no difficulty in explaining why they are stationed at the camp located on the shores of the beautiful Star Lake in Vilas County. They are there to reconstruct the north as it was in the days of the good old nineties. Forests need to be planted, improved, and protected. Wild life needs to be conserved in order to enable the public to get the greatest possible enjoyment and benefit out of Wisconsin's abundant natural resources.

The first job of the camp is to protect those resources already existing in the working area of the camp. Remote, inaccessible areas had to be reached; therefore 67 miles of truck trails and fire lanes were constructed. Men and fire fighting equipment are held in readiness during fire seasons, so that within three minutes after the fire alarm rings, the fire fighting force is in action. Three towers have been constructed with fourteen additional miles of telephone lines to connect points of vital importance in case of an emergency. All telephone lines, fire lanes, towers and equipment are checked and maintained so that everything will function smoothly when the emergency arises. During the season when there is little or no danger of fire, the men clean up areas of worthless inflammable slash and dead timber, and salvage useful material along roadsides. This is removed to lessen the fire hazard created by the passing motorist carelessly dropping burning matches and cigarette butts. A survey is being made to locate sources of underground water supplies for fire fighting purposes in those areas remote from lakes and streams.

The men from Star Lake Camp have planted 2,238,339 trees. Most of these have been used to start new forest plantations while the balance has been utilized to plant shelter belts and for roadside beautification. These men have also helped in collecting seeds, seeding, planting and cultivating millions of seedlings in the Trout Lake State Forestry Nursery.

Their work does not end with the planting. Stands of natural reproduction must also be taken care of. Over 700 acres of second growth has been thinned, trimmed and the worthless species removed to give the desirable trees a better chance to develop. Dead material is also removed to control insects and diseases as well as to decrease the danger of fires.

Clover and buckwheat are sown on barren lands to feed deer and birds. Twelve deer feeders and 17 bird feeders have been constructed and placed in areas frequented by the deer, partridges, and grouse. These feeders are supplied daily with feed.

Many lakes and streams are in such a condition that fish can no longer survive. Water deflectors, dams, and shelters have been constructed so that trout are now again living in their former habitudes. The water in the lakes has been tested and thousands of fish have been planted in their proper environment. The lakes are being improved with spawning boxes, brush refuges, brush and log tangles, and shelters to protect and propagate the desirable game fish.

Camp sites are being constructed, improved and maintained to offer recreation to the lovers of the outdoors. The beaches have been equipped with bathing facilities. Wells have been dug, tables, fireplaces, and latrines have been constructed for the convenience of the campers. Road sides have been beautified and forest roads improved to add to the joy and comfort of touring the forests. Signs have been placed along roads to guide tourists and call their attention to points of interest. For those preferring hiking, to riding, scenic foot trails have been constructed.

To determine property ownership, 136 miles of lines have been surveyed. Property corners have been re-established and accurate records of all work has been compiled with new detailed maps. 102,357 acres have been mapped in detail to formulate future work plans.

Dead and diseased trees are destroyed to prevent the spread of diseases and lessen breeding grounds for destructive insects. 14,737 acres of heavily stocked white pine have been protected from the fatal blister rust disease. The men are constantly alert for new outbreaks of insects or diseases.

More was accomplished here than just field work. Two hundred young men are kept happy; happy to be able to accomplish something, earn wages, and do their part for their country. The men welcome the opportunity to build up their bodies doing physical labor in the fresh air. These men feel that it is their job to build up the forest so that Wisconsin may again utilize to the greatest extent the full benefit of its natural resources. Barren lands yield no benefit to society!

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