Location: 8377 State Cabin Road
(Located off South Carolina Highway 174 on Edisto Island in Colleton County)

Edisto Island, Colleton County, South Carolina

Edisto Beach State Park

32.509920, -80.305068 (Center of Park Ranger Station, Google Earth, Simple Cylindrical Projection, WGS84)

Significance: Edisto Beach State Park is significant because it represents how the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) left a lasting mark on the landscape. The landscape at Edisto Beach State Park enhances its significance further in this regard by being one of sixteen state parks in South Carolina constructed by the CCC.

Description: Edisto Beach State Park is a 1,255 acre site bounded by the Atlantic Ocean, Big Bay Creek, and Scott Creek on nearly every side within the coastal plain region of South Carolina. Small wetlands and salt marshes are present throughout the site, as is beachfront and a maritime forest. The park is very forested with native trees; the majority of the trees being laurel and live oaks, cabbage palmetto, magnolia, and red cedar. Evergreen and salt-tolerant trees also dominate the space. Other native plants in the park include dune grass, gall berry, yaupon holly, inkberry, wax myrtle and Spanish bayonet. There are specific plant species growing in the area which garner preservation: incised groove bur, sea oats, and shell mound sageretia (Edisto Beach State Park General Management Plan, 2010).

The park is divided into two distinct sections. The first boasts one and a half miles of beachfront front, while the other sits further inland and takes advantage of the salt marshes and maritime forest native to the area. While the first section, in close proximity to the beach, is primarily used for recreational activities with picnicking areas, beach access and camping facilities, the second is mainly used for camping with camping plots, furnished cabins, and hiking trails.

The park opened to the public in June of 1937 after being laid out and constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps, a unit created as a result of Roosevelt’s New Deal legislation. When the park was originally erected the landscape looked much different than it does when visiting today. The section fronting the beach originally boasted a bathhouse, five cabins, restrooms, picnic areas, a maintenance building and park office. The large bathhouse was to be the focal point of this area with picnic areas and restrooms interspersed through the
landscape. Upon entering the gated site from SC 174, the contact station was immediately on the right. The visitor continued down a long drive running parallel to the shore with only a wooded section separating the area from the ocean. The restrooms were near this drive on the right and directly down from those, closer to the water, was a picnic area including a pavilion and beach volleyball area. From this point, the road split; the right led to a round-about in front of the bathhouse and the left continued to the vacation cabins and a parking area. The five original vacation cabins were placed facing the beach and among the wooded section in between the road and beach. Aside from a couple brick fire pits and a densely overgrown trail, there is no remaining documentation for the original layout of the maritime forest. (Measured Drawing).

The architectural style of the structures constructed by the CCC for the park (and much of what is present today) has been termed National Park Service Rustic Architecture or ‘parkitecture.’ These structures followed the guidelines for the CCC set by the National Park Service in the textbook *Park Structures and Facilities* and additional volumes re-circulated as *Park and Recreation Structures.* Much of the built environment at the park utilized unique craftsmanship with the use of heavy timbers and frame construction. The buildings are simple in form, typically sticking to definable geometric shapes, and are constructed of native materials and built and painted to blend in with the natural environment of the park. (Mielnik, 70).

Of interest to the CCC during the creation of the park as well as the National Park Service today is the “Indian Mound,” as termed in a report by Thomas Rutledge on the work done at the site. This mound was discovered to be a pile of mainly oyster shells with other discarded materials from Native americans who originally inhabited the area. At this point in time plans were laid out to utilize this area for a biological laboratory for the mound, fossils, and Native American paraphernalia. A biological laboratory and trail leading to the area were conceived however the only documented involvement of the CCC at this site was the erection of a bulkhead around the mound to mitigate erosion complaints (Rutledge, 1933-1937). Today, this trail is a 3.6 mile path winding through the salt marsh and maritime forest, ending at the Edisto Beach State Park Environmental Learning Center, the realized ‘biological laboratory.’

Much of the original CCC foundation work for the park was significantly damaged following a hurricane in 1940. This hurricane caused the layout of the park to be significantly reworked to accommodate the damages and prepare for future hurricanes. Two of the five cabins survived the hurricane, although they did not survive unscathed, and were moved to their current location in the Live Oak Campground in the maritime forest. Many of the facilities were rebuilt or reconstructed in a similar style to the buildings constructed originally. The described layout for the beach area was reconstructed to promote the original feel of the park. In the years following the hurricane, additional cabins were
constructed in the Live Oak Campground to match architecturally with the renovations done to the original cabins following the hurricane (Edisto Beach State Park General Management Plan, 2010).

In the years following 1996 the park has seen the greatest changes and enhancements. An Environmental Learning Center and dock were opened in 2004. Additional residences were constructed and trail improvements were made. Various camping facilities were constructed for the Live Oak campground where the original cabins were moved to. Following 2005 the trail system was added to and several hiking trails were cleared of overgrowth (Edisto Beach State Park General Management Plan, 2010).

Today the park has evolved from what was originally laid out by the CCC in 1934 as necessity to protect from natural disasters and accommodate the growth of the camping site. The beach area still contains the general layout as constructed by the CCC as well as a significant amount of the original structures installed during the early years of construction. The general location of these areas has remained constant. However, due to the stresses of the climate and the need to expand, the landscape itself contains little evidence of early CCC development. The parking has been added to at the beach area and 64 camping sites have been developed in the wooded areas. The maritime forest section has been further developed since the involvement of the CCC. Remaining evidence suggests that the CCC did little to this area aside from the erection of fire pits and other small structures. The main development here has occurred in the more recent past including the development of the Live Oak Campground where the two original CCC cabins were moved to following the hurricane in 1940. 53 campsites are present in this area. Docks protrude onto the creek and trails wind throughout the forest immersing visitors to the park in nature ("Edisto Beach State Park.").

Despite the changes that have occurred throughout the park the footprint of CCC’s work is visible to this day. The group of men who joined the ranks of the CCC in response to the nation-wide hardships shored up the local economy by providing the necessary work required for revitalization. Their hard work and level of craftsmanship helped create a park of rustic charms and grandiose scenery that continues to contribute to the splendor of the South Carolina’s state parks to this day.

History: The creation of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in 1933 as a result of New Deal legislation, helped satisfy the desperate need to provide work to the vast numbers of unemployed men as well as satiate a growing desire to travel (Mielnik, 69). Edisto Beach State Park, one of sixteen state parks designed by the CCC in South Carolina between 1934 and 1941, was the second beachfront park laid out; construction began in February of 1935 and it was opened to the public in June of 1937. The land for the park was donated by the Edisto Beach
Corporation for the purpose of creating a state park. The park was developed to showcase the natural beauty of Edisto Island and provide access to the public so that they may enjoy the natural splendor. During the trying times of the Great Depression the park’s camping areas became a tourist destination as it provided an affordable getaway (Edisto Beach State Park General Management Plan, 2010).

Company 4480 of the CCC was responsible for molding the land donated by the Edisto Beach Corporation into a state park. They followed the guidelines set by the National Park Service (NPS) in publications in 1935 and 1938 dictating state park layout guidelines (Mielnik, 70). They laid out all of the necessary elements for the land to function as a park including the construction of five cabins, a bathhouse, restrooms, a maintenance building, caretaker’s residence, a park office, an entrance gate and picnic areas. They also constructed the supporting infrastructure like the water and sewer systems. Following the completion of the CCC’s work the park was opened to the public in June of 1937 and welcomed over 4,500 visitors in that first month (Edisto Beach State Park -- History Notes).

On August 11, 1940 the park was extensively damaged when a hurricane hit Edisto beach. While it was reported that there was over $25,000 of damage from the hurricane, the General Assembly only allotted $6,000 for repairs to Edisto. (Mielnik, 141) Three of the five cabins erected by the CCC were unrepairable; the other two were restored and moved to their current location at the Live Oak Campground in the maritime forest. The infrastructure systems were uprooted and many of the supporting structures were either entirely destroyed or sustained significant damage. Not only did the hurricane have lasting effects on the built environment at Edisto Beach, but also the natural landscape. A significant amount of the trees sustained damage or were blown down and areas of the beach were entirely washed out to sea (Edisto Beach State Park General Management Plan, 2010).

The hurricane of 1940 forced the rebuilding of many of the significant structures as well as the redesigning of the destroyed landscape. The buildings that were still usable were restored, the two remaining cabins were moved from the beach to the maritime forest and fireplaces, picnic tables and shelters, restrooms, and the bulkhead were entirely rebuilt. However, this rebuilding was done by private companies and not the CCC (Edisto Beach State Park -- History Notes).

The park was closed until 1942 to allow for rebuilding following the hurricane. Interestingly enough, after renovations were completed the park was not renting cabins due to the national defense blackout. And in 1944 (and possibly earlier) the United States Coast Guard utilized the camp for coastal patrol and closed the area to the public. Following the termination of World War II, the park was reopened to the public (Edisto Beach State Park General Management Plan, 2010).
Once again, in February 1956 the park closed. This time it was for eight years to comply with South Carolina’s laws involving segregation. The park was finally reopened for good in 1964 and has evolved throughout the years of remodeling and renovating into the park visited today (Edisto Beach State Park General Management Plan, 2010).

Since 1996, Edisto Beach State Park has seen its greatest rejuvenation. The Edisto Beach State Park Environmental Learning Center and attached dock, additional management residence, and major trail improvements all took place in 2004. In 2005 the park welcomed the addition of two ADA certified cabins. In 2009 a comfort station was erected at the Live Oak Campground in the maritime forest and the comfort station and parking situation at the Beach Campground also received a much-needed face lift. A boat ramp and dock were replaced in the Live Oak campground and the two original cabins were renovated; additional cabins were also built at this time. Trail improvements and overall revitalization of the site happened at this time as well (Edisto Beach State Park General Management Plan, 2010).

Today, the forested park is home to many different species of flora and diverse landscapes ranging from beach, to forest, to wetlands. There are several species of native trees in the area, including live oaks, cabbage palmetto, magnolias, laurels, and evergreens. The array of plant life and landscape types lends itself well to the feel of the park which boasts a casual, beachy atmosphere and a calm, secluded, wooded feel (Edisto Beach State Park General Management Plan, 2010). The differences in landscape also provide ample opportunity for the visitor to experience several forms of entertainment, be it lounging on the beach, to exploring the Indian Mound along the trail, or enjoying a campfire at a primitive campsite.

As evidenced from the extensive use of the property, the site has evolved significantly from its grand opening in 1937. As a direct result of the 1940s hurricane, much of the original landscape mapped out and constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps no longer remains. However, the State Park Rangers who manage the property desire to bring the focus back, as much as possible, to the era of CCC Edisto Beach State Park. The original CCC landscape is extremely valued and seen as the foundation for the park visitors utilize today. What does remain of the original CCC designed landscape will continue to be preserved for future generations to experience the park.

Edisto Beach State Park -- History Notes. State Commission of Forestry -- Annual Reports, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, S.C.


Historian: Shannon Devlin and Lauren Hoopes
292 Meeting Street, Charleston SC 29403
Clemson University/College of Charleston
(843) 937-9596
March 22, 2014
General landscape view of the beach section of Edisto Beach State Park; of special note is the palmetto trees which were thought to have been planted by the CCC. (Shannon Devlin, 02/25/14)

View of the entrance loop leading to the bathhouse. Both were laid out by the CCC and retain a great deal of original form. (Shannon Devlin, 02/25/14).
Palmetto trees were planted in rows, believed to have been planted by the CCC, in between the bathhouse and beach. (Shannon Devlin, 02/25/14).

The bathhouse, constructed by the CCC in a “rustic” architecture, has been altered throughout the years but still retains much of its original character. (Shannon Devlin, 02/25/14).
The general landscape layout of the Live Oak Campground. (Shannon Devlin, 02/25/14).

Cabin 1, pictured above, is one of the two remaining cabins that were constructed by the CCC. While it has been renovated, it still retains the general feel of the original cabin. (Shannon Devlin, 02/25/14)
Cabin 2, pictured here, is the only other remaining original cabin. (Shannon Devlin, 02/25/14)

Image of a picnic shelter near the beach. (Shannon Devlin, 02/25/14)
SP 8, Edisto Beach, S.C. Beach Development Plan, Section A (SC State Parks, 10/30/35)

Edisto Beach State Park, Plot Plan, Cabin Area #1 (South Carolina State Parks, 08/11/37).
Edisto Beach, Bathhouse Area Development (South Carolina State Parks, 04/16/37).

Edisto Beach, S.C., SP 8, Contact Station at Entrance to Beach Area (South Carolina State Parks, 02/04/36).
Edisto Beach, SP 8, Entrance to Recreation Area. Bathhouse, Picnic Shelters, and Cabins. (South Carolina State Parks, 12/27/37).

Edisto Beach State Park, SP 8, Bathhouse. (South Carolina State Parks, 02/11/37).
Aerial View Edisto Beach Bathhouse. (South Carolina State Parks, June 1954).

Edisto Bathhouse and Beach. (South Carolina State Parks, undated).
Edisto Bathhouse. (South Carolina State Parks, undated).

Edisto Volleyball. (South Carolina State Parks, undated).
Edisto Cabin. (South Carolina State Parks, undated).

Edisto Shelter. (South Carolina State Parks, undated).
Edisto Gatehouse. (South Carolina State Parks, undated).
RELEASE AND ASSIGNMENT

I, _Lauren Hoopes and Shannon Devlin_, am the owner, or am authorized to act on behalf of the owner, of the materials described below including but not limited to copyright therein, that the National Park Service has requested to use, reproduce, and make available as public domain materials at the Library of Congress as part of the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record collections. (If not the sole copyright owner, please specify in the space below any additional permissions needed to grant these rights.) I hereby transfer and assign to the National Park Service any and all rights including but not limited to copyrights in the materials specified below.

Survey Number: HABS No. _________, HAER No. _________, or HALS No. _________

Types of Materials (please check all that apply):
Photographs _X_  Illustrations _X_  Textual materials _X_  Oral History/Interviews ___
Audiotape ___  Videotape ___  Other (describe) ____________________________________________

Detailed Description of Materials (attach additional pages if necessary):
Text and photographs by author ______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Additional Permissions Needed, if any (for example, copyright owner, subjects in photographs, illustrations in text):
______________________________________________________________________________

Disposition of Materials After Use (please check one):  ____ Return to owner
_X_ May be retained

Lauren Hoopes
Shannon Devlin
Name (please print)
292 Meeting Street,
Charleston SC, 29401
Address
(843) 937-9596
Telephone Number

04/02/2014
Date

Signature

292 Meeting Street,
Charleston SC, 29401