Lake Greenwood State Park

Significance: Lake Greenwood State Park is notable for its association with the Civilian Conservation Corps, a New Deal era program, which actively worked in the creation of Lake Greenwood State Park from 1938 until 1942. Lake Greenwood State Park contains numerous elements which date from the era of CCC involvement, many with a high degree of integrity. Notable architectural features include two caretaker’s residences, a picnic and barbeque shelter, and smaller, utilitarian outbuildings such as a boat house and pump house. These
buildings feature architecture that is typical of structures designed and built by the CCC. Features such as a series of stone fire pits, stone and brick water fountains, and campsites all date from the CCC period of construction as well. Construction of a massive, stone-walled boat basin was started by the CCC but was not completed by 1942 when the Corps left the site.

The general layout of the park, including its curving access roads and naturalistic but cultivated horticultural features also remains quite consistent with the original CCC plans for the park. Plantings which remain from the CCC era include a double row of White Oaks, a large number of loblolly pines throughout the park, and plants such as American Holly, red bud, and azalea bushes. A notable CCC era feature with a great deal of integrity is the large, terraced Bermuda grass lawn which stretches from the patio of the main lodge to the stone wall of the boat basin. In general, the overall feel of the park remains quite consistent with the goals of the CCC: it creates a sense of rustic involvement with nature incorporating well-crafted and naturalistic views while simultaneously remaining an orderly and user-friendly environment.

Description: Lake Greenwood State Park is a 914-acre state park in Greenwood County, South Carolina. The closest settlement is the town of Ninety Six, which is located about five miles west of the park. The park is accessed from South Carolina Highway 702, and is organized around Lake Greenwood, an 11,400 acre lake. Lake Greenwood was created between 1938 and 1940 and exists due to Buzzard’s Roost Dam, a hydroelectric dam on the Saluda River. The site for the state park was selected to take advantage of the lake that was being created. The lake is now used for boating and fishing, although the water quality is somewhat muddy and was not conducive to swimming when originally constructed.

The main access road which leads to the park is partially flanked by an incomplete stone wall, which is built from irregularly-sized locally-quarried stone blocks. The construction of this wall was abandoned somewhat suddenly when World War II began, and some of the stones which were intended to be used to complete the wall lie scattered behind it. The access road is paved and continues for some distance through a primarily conifer wooded area before passing two Civilian Conservation Corps-era caretaker’s houses and a small, modern fee station. The road culminates in a roundabout in front of the main lodge, named the Drummond Center. The Drummond Center was not completed until the early 2000s, although it was built to externally resemble the lodge originally designed for the site during the era of significance.

Five other paved access roads extend from this central area much like the digits on a hand, and each leads to a roundabout situated on a finger of land that reaches into the lake. At the end of these roads lie the three picnic shelters and two campgrounds. A 1960s-era recreation center is located slightly inland. Scattered throughout the park are three freestanding restroom facilities, which are built of masonry, brick and rustic pine siding, and which also appear to date
from the 1960s.

Much of the built environment at Lake Greenwood State Park can be traced to the work done by the Civilian Conservation Corps between 1938 and 1942. A great deal of effort went into the creation of the boat basin and the stone walls which surround it. As the lake rises and sinks approximately 10-15 feet depending on the season and the flow through Buzzard’s Roost Dam, it was necessary to construct a large sea wall containing the inlet nearest to the main lodge. This wall contains sets of stone and concrete stairs which allow easy access to the lake despite varying water levels. The construction of this wall and the steps was initiated by the CCC, although it remained incomplete when the CCC left the park in 1942. There are also three boat ramps on site.

Near this basin is a wood frame boat house which dates from the CCC era. It is now rarely used save as a storage area and shows some signs of disrepair, including rotting siding and roofing materials and peeling paint. This is the only building on the site which is in this sort of disrepair and is visible to the public.

The two caretaker’s houses on the access road leading into the park also date from the CCC era. These houses are somewhat rustic in style, with wooden siding and large brick chimneys. They feature gabled roofs and large porches supported by heavy, square wooden columns. One contains three bedrooms, while the other has two. These buildings appear to be in excellent repair, and show no signs of deterioration or lack of maintenance.

Although the CCC had plans to construct at least two picnic shelters on the site, they were only able to complete one. Shelter #1 still stands today and is in good repair. Shelter #1 is a wood frame side-gabled building in three parts. It has a poured concrete foundation. The center portion is open to the air on two sides and is enclosed by way of two very large brick fireplaces on the gable ends. It features a brick floor. The heavy beams supporting the roof are exposed and have decorative metal brackets connecting them. One of the fireplaces is double-sided, and there is a smaller covered area on the other side for barbequing. The third portion of Shelter #1 is completely enclosed and contains restrooms.

Interspersed throughout the five fingers of land that reach out into the lake are a number of CCC-era fire pits, drinking fountains, and campsites. These are spaced regularly in areas which were deemed to have particularly attractive viewsheds. The fire pits are fairly rustic in appearance and consist of large blocks of locally-quarried rock arranged to form a U-shape. They were originally outfitted with metal fittings and grates, although most of the grates are now missing. The drinking fountains were built either in the same stone or in brick. These fountains are no longer operational.

The only other building at the park which dates from the CCC era is an old pump house, which has been moved from its original location and is used in the maintenance area of the park as a storage shed. The building, a very small and rustic wood frame structure, shows signs of disrepair, including some rotting of the wooden siding and extensive paint loss.
There are a number of structures on the site which do not date to the CCC era but which nonetheless show similar design features and share the same material palette. Picnic shelters #2 and #3 appear to have been built with great sensitivity with regards to the original designs used by the CCC, and share the same heavy, overhanging roof, visible beams, fireplace design, and general horizontality that characterize Shelter #1. Both picnic shelters are in excellent condition. The already mentioned Drummond Center was built to externally resemble the original CCC design, and also features elements of rusticity and horizontality like the picnic shelters. It has a large patio area that faces out towards the boat basin and is a wooden building with stone elements that reflect the locally-quarried rustic stone blocks used in the original CCC construction on the site.

Some of the buildings erected during the 1960s do not blend seamlessly with the CCC-era structures, although the material palette remains largely the same. The freestanding restroom buildings and the recreation building are examples of this, and tend to have a more modernistic design. The restroom buildings have a more angular and less horizontal profile than the CCC-era structures, and do not feature the large, overhanging eaves or heavy dark wood framing. Instead, they are painted masonry with brick interspersed throughout, creating a sort of adobe and brick appearance. They have unusually-angled double-pitched roofs. The recreation building has wooden siding but is shed-like in shape and features an asymmetrical roofline. In general, it appears much more modern in design than the CCC buildings.

Perhaps the most obvious landscape feature that was contributed to Lake Greenwood State Park by the CCC is the terraced Bermuda grass lawn leading from the main lodge area to the stone walls of the boat basin. The lawn area features five levels set out in a concentric ring and forming roughly a half-circle. Another obvious CCC-era landscape feature is the short double row of White Oaks which lines the road leading to picnic shelter #1. These trees are nearing the end of their life cycle and already two of the ten originally planted oaks have died.

There are numerous other horticultural contributions of the CCC to the park which are not immediately obvious. Although roughly half of the park area was wooded when the construction of the park began, almost all of the land has been landscaped. This includes both the removal and planting of trees as well as shrubs and other plants. For example, a total of 10,000 loblolly pines and 1,000 yellow poplar trees were interspersed throughout the park. Before the lake was created, the CCC removed a number of native plants from the area which was to be flooded, and replanted them throughout the park. Some of the types of plants which were used by the CCC and which are still in evidence are: azalea, red cedar, American Holly, flowering dogwood, and red bud.

In general, the overall feel of the landscape is one of cultivated naturalism: conifers and hardwood trees are fairly evenly distributed with the ground beneath them well cleared of brush. Great care seems to have been taken to create attractive view sheds and to then place campsites, fire pits, and picnic
shelters in such a way as to capitalize on the views. Although shrubs and other native plants have been intentionally planted, the landscape does not seem artificial. The only obviously ordered plantings are the row of White Oaks and the landscaping which surrounds the main lodge, including the grassy terraces. The access roads wind pleasingly through the park, following the lines of the topography in curvilinear paths which minimize the impact of the asphalt on the sense of natural beauty. The well-used areas of the park, such as the campsites, roads, and fire pits, all appear to be in excellent condition.

History:

The Civilian Conservation Corps, also known as Soil Soldiers or the Tree Army, was one of many New Deal works programs set up during the Great Depression to get young, unemployed men back to work. During its lifespan from 1933 to 1942, the CCC created more than 800 state parks across the United States, 16 of which were in South Carolina. Lake Greenwood State Park, located in Ninety Six, South Carolina is an exceptional example of a Civilian Conservation Corps state park project. Not only does it still have significant landscape features and buildings that are attributed to the CCC era, but it is also a striking example of an unfinished CCC project due to dismantling of the program at the beginning of World War II.

The location of Lake Greenwood State Park was chosen not because of any historical significance, but because of its potential topography. At the time the park was being planned in 1938, the Public Works Administration was undertaking a large hydroelectric project in the vicinity. Known as the Buzzard Roost project, the plan was to dam the Saluda River to create a 12,000-acre lake with approximately 40 miles of shoreline. The dam was not to be completed until 1940, but the intended lake was expected to attract a number of boaters and other visitors.

The neighboring towns of Newberry, Laurens, Greenwood, and Clinton had no nearby recreation area, at least not one within 50 miles. Taking advantage of the potential lake front park, the state purchased approximately 1,000 acres of land from several different sources to form the area for the park. When the CCC began to plan this property for use as a park, it was primarily open farmland and forest.

The CCC also took advantage of the imminent dam to gather resources from the area that would soon be underwater. Trees that were in the path of flooding were harvested for timber, to be sawed on site, and native trees and

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2 *Master Plan Report for Greenwood State Park - Greenwood County, South Carolina*. 1934-1942. Forestry Commission, Administration Civilian Conservation Corps Files, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, South Carolina.
other plants were removed from the impending lake area to be used as landscaping in the park.\(^3\) The CCC incorporated these native plants into their detailed planting plans of the park that they created. Many of these planting features can still be seen today, such as the line of white oaks on the road to picnic shelter one. The CCC also began work on one of the park’s key features, the boat basin, prior to the full flooding of the dammed area.

The original plan for the park not only called for detailed planting and landscape designs, but also extensive roadway networks that were to be well graded, foot trails, water systems, sewage disposal, power and telephones lines, and a number of structures and amenities. The original plans called for a community building, several picnic areas, sports fields with a field house, an outdoor theater, overnight accommodations, a stable, and several managers buildings. This, however, was only the plan for the white section of the park.

There was also planned a “negro section” of Lake Greenwood State Park to provide recreational activities for the areas significant African-American population. The section of the park to be used by African-American was to be located across the county road in an area that would not have any lake access. However, it would have some of the same amenities as the white area. Picnic areas were to be provided as was a pool and sports fields.

The plan for Lake Greenwood State Park was approved in May of 1938, though construction did not begin until that fall when CCC Company 2413 arrived in Ninety Six after completing Poinsett State Park in Wedgefield, South Carolina.\(^4\) Work progressed on Lake Greenwood State Park, with reports being sent to the CCC headquarters monthly, until 1942. Support for CCC projects had already been waning at the federal level. However, with the onset of World War II, many of the young men who served as the labor force of the Civilian Conservation Corps left the program in order to enlist. Work at Greenwood was literally left unfinished.

In a memo dated March 6, 1942, the camp at Lake Greenwood State Park was notified that their camp “is to be abandoned March 11, [1942].”\(^5\) This sudden halt to the work at Greenwood left many of the projects from the original plan either incomplete or never started. The main entrance to the camp provides the clearest evidence to the abandonment of the camp. While the foundations had been poured on both sides of the entrance road for a rock wall on either side, only one of those walls was partially completed. Beside that partially completed wall, still today lie piles of abandoned rock.

The boat basin was also left unfinished at the time the camp was

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\(^5\) "Memorandum for Mr. J. H. Gadsby." R. A. Walker to J. H. Gadsby. March 6, 1942. South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, South Carolina.
deserted. The CCC completed the terracing between the site of the lodge and the shoreline; however, the CCC did not finish much of the stonework that can now be seen at the boat basin. “We did not start the walls or steps, though most of the stone for the steps has been quarried,” states one job completion report. The writer finished with a hint of regret, “Was sorry that we could not complete this job because it would make a real nice area.”

Many projects were far along in the planning process, but did not come to fruition because of the closure of the CCC camp. For instance, the lodge, which was supposed to be the focal point of the park, was never built. There were several designs being looked at and proposed for the lodge, but the building itself was never constructed while the CCC worked at the park. A fire tower was also being designed for the park but was never built. The picnic shelter for the African-American park had already been budgeted, but was abandoned with the park itself. The pools, signatures of the park because the water from the lake was considered unsuitable to swim in, were never built either.

While many of the projects the CCC aspired to at Lake Greenwood State Park were never fulfilled, there were several that were completed that now have become important character defining features of the park and providing hints of its CCC origins. The manager’s house as well as a pump house were erected and still stand at the park today, though the pump house has been moved from its original location. The circle drive in front of the modern lodge along with many of the roadways and parking areas were laid out and constructed by the CCC. The Corps was also able to plant at trees and shrubs along at least two miles of roadways. The CCC also planted Bermuda grass throughout the property, a prominent feature of the park today, especially on the terraces.

The most significant CCC setting in the park is located near picnic shelter one. This shelter was the only picnic area to be completed by the CCC at the park. A planned dining and recreation area surrounds the open pavilion. Twenty-four picnic table and bench features were built surrounding the picnic shelter along with three stone water fountains and ten outdoor fireplaces. All of these features were connected with trails to one another. This remains the most intact are with CCC construction in the park.

Following the Civilian Conservation Corps departure from the park, park management continued to promote building campaigns. Bathroom buildings were added in the 1950s or 1960s. Graded campsites were built on the other side of the park. Finally, in the early 2000s, a lodge was built at the park. Located on the sit the original lodge was intended for and sticking with similar design aesthetics, the Drummond Center now serves as the center point of the park. It serves as the park office, but is also used as a museum to educate visitors about the park’s history as a Civilian Conservation Corps’ project.

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Sources:


*Master Plan Report for Greenwood State Park - Greenwood County, South Carolina.* 1934-1942. Forestry Commission, Administration Civilian Conservation Corps Files, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, South Carolina.


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April 2, 2014
Site Plan – White and Negro Areas
(Digital photograph of original image in the South Carolina Department of Archives and History dated 1939; photo by Katie Dykens, March 29, 2014).

Planting Plan Day Use Area – White Area
(Digital photograph of South Carolina State Parks image; photo by Frances Pinto, March 7, 2014).
Planting Checklist Day Use Area – White Area
(Digital photograph of South Carolina State Parks image; photo by Frances Pinto, March 7, 2014).

Plant List
(Digital photograph of South Carolina State Parks image; photo by Frances Pinto, March 7, 2014).
Planting Plan Day Use Area – Negro Area
(Digital photograph of South Carolina State Parks image; photo by Frances Pinto, March 7, 2014).

Planting Plan Picnic Area
(Digital photograph of South Carolina State Parks image; photo by Frances Pinto, March 7, 2014).
Clearing the Reservoir
(Digital photograph of original image in the South Carolina Department of Archives and History dated August 21, 1939; photo by Katie Dykens, March 29, 2014).

Fire Pit
(Digital photograph of original image in the South Carolina Department of Archives and History dated 1939; photo by Katie Dykens, March 29, 2014).
Landing Dock and Piers
(Digital photograph of original image in the South Carolina Department of Archives and History dated November 1, 1939; photo by Katie Dykens, March 29, 2014).

Picnic Shelter #1 – White Area
(Digital photograph of original image in the South Carolina Department of Archives and History dated November 1, 1939; photo by Katie Dykens, March 29, 2014).
Entrance Road (Negro Area)
(Digital photograph of original image in the South Carolina Department of Archives and History dated 1939; photo by Katie Dykens, March 29, 2014).

Seawall
( Frances Pinto, March 7, 2014).
Seawall Steps
(Frances Pinto, March 7, 2014).

Stairs to Boat Basin
(Frances Pinto, March 7, 2014).
Boat House Near Boat Basin
( Frances Pinto, March 7, 2014).

Boat Basin and Terraced Lawn
( Frances Pinto, March 7, 2014).
Picnic Shelter #1 (Frances Pinto, March 7, 2014).

Fireplace in Picnic Shelter #1 (Frances Pinto, March 7, 2014).
Drinking Fountain  
(Melanie Weston, March 7, 2014).

Fire Pit and Picnic Table  
(Melanie Weston, March 7, 2014).
Fire Pit with Grate
(Melanie Weston, March 7, 2014).

Entry Wall with Abandoned Stones Behind
(Frances Pinto, March 7, 2014).
Caretaker’s House #1
(Frances Pinto, March 7, 2014).
Caretaker’s House #2
(Melanie Weston, March 7, 2014).
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