Location: 158 E Ellison Ln, Pickens, South Carolina
Lat: 35.018971 Long: -82.693042
Table Rock State Park Visitor Center/Park Headquarters
Pickens County, bounded by Jocassee Gorges Management Area to the west and the North Carolina State line to the north and by the Town of Pickens to the south. The Park is within the Table Rock Historic District.

Significance: Table Rock State Park is a significant example of Civilian Conservation Corps development and interplay between a unique natural environment and prehistory resources in the State of South Carolina. The architecture and engineering features present on site are exemplary of state and national park construction style, often referred to as “parkitecture.” As one of 16 state parks developed by the CCC in South Carolina, the park serves as a significant contributor to the broad patterns of our nation’s history through its development during the New Deal under the direction of the National Park Service.

The development and construction of Table Rock’s buildings, lakes, fish hatcheries, trail systems, and roads are integral examples of form and functionality of CCC projects and how they sought to best preserve and experience America’s best natural and historic resources. The remaining historic fabric at Table Rock is significant in number and integrity to original design. The park has 41 contributing features to its National Register of Historic Places status as a historic district. Table Rock State Park is also a crucial habitat for many native plant and animal species which are exceedingly rare outside the protective boundaries of the park. The park is vital to the nation for its protection of eastern mountain wilderness, conservation of an area culturally and historically significant to Native American peoples, and its association with the broad patterns of national history surrounding the development of the site under the Civilian Conservation Corps before World War II.

Description: Table Rock State Park is a 3,083-acre South Carolina State Park at the southern tip of the Blue Ridge Mountains and in the northwest portion of the state. The park is located within Pickens County, which sits on the state line between South Carolina and North Carolina. The park in divided by State Highway 11, or the Cherokee Foothills Scenic Highway. The entrance to Table Rock is on the north side of Highway 11. To the south of Highway 11 is Lake Oolenoy. On the shores of the lake is a recently constructed Visitor’s Center and Park Office with amenities such as on site public parking, a public boat ramp and
two fishing piers. This site was not original to the CCC landscape as a recent addition to the park.

North of Highway 11 lies a majority of the protected acreage of Table Rock State Park. Coming into the park from the east, the East Gate Entrance leads to the two-lane, two-way Table Rock State Park Road that circles the Civilian Conservation Corps manipulated landscape. Table Rock State Park Road climbs north, up the valley created by the parks centerpiece and namesake natural landscape feature, Table Rock Mountain. The winding road shortly comes to a pull off loop on the left side of the roadway. The parking lot and overlook is built up to rise above a stream that connects Pinnacle Lake with Lake Oolenoy. Stacked locally mined granite is used to support the overlook. The sizeable granite rectangular blocks were cut and placed as a part of the CCC projects on site. A trail connects with the southern base of the pull off that leads down to the CCC constructed damn, which creates Pinnacle Lake.

Further north on Table Rock State Park Road, along the shores of Pinnacle Lake, is Table Rock’s State Park Lodge. This recently renovated CCC constructed lodge is a hewn-log structure in the “parkitecture” style that overlooks Pinnacle Lake. The lodge is entered at the top floor from a CCC designed parking lot for the special events and community venue, which is a loop one-way stepped parking lot with plantings between the levels of parking. The lodge supports a first story porch on its western façade facing Pinnacle Lake that can be exited from either end by way of stone steps that lead to the first story stone patio, which has outdoor seating for large gatherings. From this stone patio there are exits onto a winding, granite step trail that leads down to the waters edge. From this viewpoint, the Bathhouse and beach swimming area can be seen on the northern edge of the lake. The shore below supports a canoe launch, currently in a state of disrepair. The trail below the Lodge has become overgrown with plantings that are not original to the CCC landscape of the site. An ADA compliant ramp was added to the long during their resent renovation of the lodge.

To the northeast of the lodge, moving uphill further from Pinnacle Lake are two secluded CCC constructed cabins, numbers 15 and 16. Tucked beyond these cabins, along a forested trail sits the CCC installed Fish Hatchery site. The hatchery contains pairs of long, deep pools for older fish while the smaller pools, for younger fish, have a shape that is reminiscent of a fish and more oval in shape. This system of connected pools is not currently in use by park management. However, there is ongoing maintenance that prevents the pools from falling into disrepair. The pools are cleaned yearly and build up is removed; planks of wood are placed in the pools to prevent smaller fauna from becoming trapped. Restarting the hatchery system on site is not within the foreseeable future of park management due to lack of funding.

West of the fish hatcheries and cabins 15 and 16 is the seasonal swimming area, parking lot for the swimming area, Nature Center, and hiking trails to the north of Pinnacle Lake. A CCC constructed Bath House sits on a slope down to Pinnacle Lake and overlooks the recreation area. Stone curved steps lead up the slope from either side of the Bathhouse for accessibility. The
Bath House is open seasonally and continues the “parkatecture” style timber frame construction of the Lodge. The board-and-batten wood building is long and rectangular in shape, with an intersecting gable portico entrance that divides male and female facilities. The building is characterized by its three over three horizontal windows at the intersection between the outside walls and gable roof overhang. Today, as needs have changed within the park, the center room of the bath house that bisects the bathroom facilities has been renovated to become a space for educational programs that park management puts on seasonally.

Below the Bathhouse is a steep decline, which has many large trees and shrubs, which were not a part of the original CCC Pinnacle Lake plantings. The only original tree on site is a large pine tree which projects out of the downward slope in front of the Bathhouse. Today, where the bottom of the hill levels out, there is a seating area, which looks out to Pinnacle Lake. The shoreline of the lake in this area serves as a beach for visitors today with a sand section that is fenced in by the more recent addition of a chain link fence. Along the shore also sits a CCC structure that is today used as a concession stand for Spring and Summer visitors to the park.

North of the beach and recreational area, across Table Rock State Park Road is the Nature Center which serves as the beginning point for the hiking trails. One of the trails original to the CCC layout is Carrick Creek trail, a 2 mile loop trail passing natural streams, water cascades and water falls. Table Rock Summit Trail, a 3.5-mile hike, contains a shelter that was also originally constructed by the CCC.

Heading southwest around the tip of Pinnacle Lake is the grouping of cabins 1 through 12. The cabins are spread over the area on either side of Table Rock State Park Road, originally for views overlooking Pinnacle Lake. Today, brush, saplings, and some mature trees block much of the viewshed to the lake. Most of the growth was not a part of the CCC plantings. At one time the area surrounding the mountain was stripped and lodged; when the CCC took on construction of the park viewsheds to the water were an integral consideration in their landscape plantings and design. The landscape designed by the CCC did not block viewsheds, they strived to enhance the landscape. After the CCC left Table Rock due to the beginning of World War II, the landscape was not as strictly monitored and therefore as become overgrown.

On the south side of Table Rock State Park Road sits cabins 5 through 8. All of the cabins were constructed by the CCC and have similar rectangular plans and gable roofs. Cabin 5 is a two-bedroom cabin constructed of hewn-logs with an outdoor seating area with view of Table Rock Mountain. Cabin 8 is a board-and–batten 2-bedroom cabin with a shed gable roof. It is secluded by its position at the end of the line of 4 cabins and the overgrowth surrounding it. All of the cabins have distinctive large stone fireplaces and pine wood paneled interiors original to construction.

East of the Table Rock cabins are the CCC laid out campgrounds. Today there are 69 campgrounds in this camping area, but 94 designated campsites within the State Park. South of the camp grounds on Table Rock State Park Road is the fee station and West Gate Entrance where Table Rock State Park Road
terminates at West Gate Road. West Gate Road heading south leads visitors back to Highway 11.

History:  

Early Developments

Table Rock State Park has a long history of cultural significance. Located in current day Pickens County, South Carolina in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, the park includes Table Rock Mountain, Pinnacle Mountain and The Stool. The area was once home to the Lower Cherokee Nation, who believed that a “Great Spirit” inhabited the mountains and ate his meals on a great mountain shaped like a table while sitting on a smaller mountain shaped like a stool. By 1777 the Cherokee Nation had ceded most of their land to the state in a treaty dated May 20, 1777. Two subsequent treaties in 1785 and 1816 stripped the Cherokees of the remainder of their land, but the traditional names given to the mountains endured.

One of the earliest known records, an 1809 land dispute between North and South Carolina, calls the area “Table Mountain.” An 1816 article in the Camden Gazette describes visitors to the area as “curious travelers” and “men of science,” but by 1837, visits to Table Mountain became popular among all residents of the Carolinas. The cool mountain summers afforded relief from the heat of the Lowcountry and with it, the lowered risk of malaria and yellow fever.

The Table Rock Hotel was opened by William Sutherland in 1845. The twenty room hotel was constructed out of local lumber and provided numerous ways to climb the mountain. Some trails were made for horses, but most were footpaths. To reach the summit, visitors had to climb wooden steps mounted to iron pins stuck in the mountain. The steps were built by Daniel Carrol, an employee of William Sutherland, soon after the hotel opened. The holes made for the iron pins are still visible on the mountain today. With the death of William Sutherland in 1859 and the onset of the Civil War, tourism in the area declined significantly. Stephen Keith took over the management of the Table Rock Hotel in the 1870s, converting it into a summer resort. The hotel remained in operation until the early 1900s when a new hotel was built on a different site farther up the mountain. The hotel was abandoned by the Keith family in 1912 and was later moved to a new site at the foot of Slickin Falls, a waterfall close to Table Rock Mountain.

The CCC and Table Rock State Park

On March 31, 1933, newly inaugurated President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed a bill that created Emergency Conservation Work (ECW) as part of his “Hundred Days’ War” period of reform. The ECW created the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) which sought to develop land in South Carolina through forestry, soil conservation and the construction of state parks. Table Rock, with its stunning vistas and potential for public recreation, was selected for development as a state park. The city of Greenville, South Carolina donated 1,010 acres toward the development of a state park. Pickens County purchased acreage from private owners and donated it to the state, giving Table Rock State Park a total of 2680 acres. The park was established in the spring of 1935 and by
August of the same year the CCC began developing the park, employing two companies of World War I veterans, SP-5 and SP-6. Architects John Linely and Fred Ledbetter designed the park structures with the help of twenty architecture students from Clemson University, who visited the site before the arrival of the CCC. The designs were then approved by the National Park Service.

July of 1936 brought two new junior CCC camps to Table Rock as the winter months and mountainous terrain took a toll on the older veteran camps. Company 5465 (SP-5) was in charge of the construction of the park, building its roads, trails and park structures while company 5466 (SP-6) headed the construction of a concrete dam and spillway that created the twenty three acre Pinnacle Lake. Each camp had around 200 men, most of whom were from South Carolina.

Work began with the construction of a gravity fed water supply system to provide water for the CCC camps, Pinnacle Lake and the park structures sourced from nearby Carrick’s Creek. The park roads were then laid out. They followed the topography of the area and were carefully planted with native shrubs and trees in order to make the road seem more natural and provide vistas for park visitors. Prior to the construction of the dam, thirty two acres of land at the lake site were cleared. Company SP-6 was disbanded after the completion of the dam and spillway in June of 1937.

Construction materials used at Table Rock State Park were sourced locally and similar materials were used for all buildings. Whiteside granite and other rocks used during the construction were quarried from within the park or from surrounding private lands. Timber for park structures was also locally sourced; some logs were even donated by local landowners. The park was landscaped with local plant material, including rare wildflowers and vegetation such as the Walking Fern and the Catawba Azalea.

Table Rock State Park opened to the public on April 4, 1938; 500 visitors attended an opening ceremony. Facilities at Table Rock include a bathhouse and beach area at Pinnacle Lake, concessions building, lodge, eight cabins, houses for the park superintendent and warden, picnic and trail shelters, fish-rearing ponds, roads and trails. The fish-rearing ponds were operated with the help of the South Carolina Fish and Game department and stocked Pinnacle Lake as well as surrounding lakes and streams with rainbow trout for fishing. The Lodge at Table Rock State Park is arguably the most important building on the property. It sits on a hill overlooking Pinnacle Lake and affords views of both Table Rock Mountain and Pinnacle Mountain. The L-shaped building has a great hall on the first floor and a dining hall, sun porch and kitchen on the basement floor. It was used for special events at the park and in 1940 a restaurant opened inside the lodge.

As the threat of World War II grew closer, the United States began cutting back on funding for government programs. In October of 1941 company SP-5 was disbanded and work at the park was stopped. Only buildings that were near completion were finished. June 1942 brought the CCC to an end as Congress discontinued appropriations for the CCC. Table Rock State Park continued to be used by the public as a recreational site and is still in use today.
In 1967, ownership of Table Rock State Park was transferred from the South Carolina State Park System to the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism.

Sources:


CCC Project Files, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, South Carolina

Table Rock State Park Files, South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism, Columbia, South Carolina.


Interview with Poll Knowland at Table Rock State Park. March 1, 2014.

Historian: Claire Achtyl, Alison Dunleavy, Justin Schwebler, and Laura Lee Worrell
292 Meeting Street Charleston, South Carolina 29403, 859-512-1365
Survey Completed: April 03, 2014
A hand cut stepped granite dam is displayed with an overflow tunnel in the bottom left, sapling trees, underbrush growth, and natural rock accumulation within the water bed. The dam exemplifies the CCC’s ability to manipulate the landscape within the park for the use of the public (Justin Schwebler, March 1, 2014).
The type C cabin is displayed by Cabin 5, one of three common types built at Table Rock State Park, exemplified with evolutionary modifications to the structure, non-historic forest growth in the background overlooking the lake, bed plantings, modern asphalt paved drive and grill for visitors. The significance of the simplistic form and local materials used by the CCC for the construction of the cabins is evident (Justin Schwebler, March 1, 2014).
The Lodge depicted was restored in 2011 from a restaurant back to the CCC’s working plans using original materials and restoration building methods. The new growth trees and plantings not exist around and within the Lodge’s planting beds with modern asphalt driving path and parking. A modern handicap ramp has been added to the left of the structure using compatible materials to allow access to the below ground level to all patrons for the first time in the structure’s history (Justin Schwebler, March 1, 2014).
The serpentine granite stepped path from Pinnacle Lake’s southeast shore leading up to the Lodge is now overgrown with mature shrubbery and trees, not original to the CCC plantings. The path once connected to a now non-existing canoe ramp at the lake shore (Laura Lee Worrell, March 1, 2014).
The Bath House sits above the lawn and beach of Pinnacle Lake. It currently operates as a classroom and interpretive space for school groups. Two cut granite stepped paths provide access from the Pinnacle Lake parking lot and lawn. These stepped paths also serve as the borders for the landscape bed which contains mostly new growth trees and shrubs (Justin Schwebler, March 1, 2014).
Pinnacle Lake’s beach parking lot retains its original CCC footprint with a few original remaining trees that have not been damaged. The only modification to the lot has been asphalt paving over the original gravel lot (Justin Schwebler, March 1, 2014).
The middle Fry Pool portion of the existing gravity fed fish hatchery lay unused with no direct visitor path leading to them (Justin Schwebler, March 1, 2014).
Weir located on the Carrick Creek to divert water towards the diversion ditch that feeds the fish hatchery located to the south (Justin Schwebler, March 1, 2014).
Drawing of the Lodge at Table Rock State Park and the current surrounding and viewshed (Justin Schwebler, March 1, 2014).
Drawing of Cabin 5 with the current surrounding and viewshed (Justin Schwebler, March 1, 2014).
Drawing of Cabin 8 with the current surrounding and viewshed with evolutionary modifications to the cabin type C (Justin Schwebler, March 1, 2014).
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