# Unburying The Hamlin CCC/POW Camp Site

[By Edward D. Evans - 2024]

## The Inside Story Behind What Was Accomplished




*Park Guy (left), Walt, Dan, Nick, Conner, Park Guy, Sue and Jesse.*

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## The inside Story Behind What Was Accomplished

Note: It would be to the reader's advantage to have copies of the aerial photos of the old CCC camp to follow along on. Also, be aware that the chronology and time lapses in the three work diaries of the project do not match exactly what is written here. This writing is from the author's memory which tends to move it along faster than the actual laboring did. Telling the story as it is remembered may keep it moving but does not change in any way what was accomplished!

## The "Brief Peek" That Got It Started

In 1985 I had just been elected to the Hamlin Town Board. I was still a "newcomer" after living 17 years in the Town and had to switch my voter registration to "Democrat" to run upstream against the Republicans who ran the town. When I won, I dragged a real Democrat onto the Board with me. I was given the menial assignment "Town Board Liaison to the Town Historian," Mary Smith.

Mary Smith was undoubtably the best Town Historian the Town ever had, and she was in the process of organizing a reunion of 40 or so CCC enlistees who had worked in the Hamlin CCC Camp. It was, in fact, her second such reunion, and she wanted this one to be special! I had just given up smoking and with the sudden supply of leftover cash with every paycheck thereafter, I bought a new Beta movie camera. I told Mary I would videotape the entire event for her. She was pleased.

The Park had a part in the reunion, too. The original site had nothing to mark where anything in the CCC camp was, so they did a lot of guessing. They cleared an area about the size of two tennis courts that turned out to be north and a bit west of where the center of the original camp stood. They erected a fat, wooden flagpole in the center of their cleared area which turned out to be about 300 feet from where the original flagpole stood. No one would know the difference. A bronze plaque with information inscribed on it was fastened to the pole. A local Boy Scout troop was assigned the actual flag raising.

Before the planned ceremony, the CCC alumni covered the picnic tables with photos they had taken at the camp back in the 1930s. The old timers stood by their collections and told stories about the good old days in the CCC camp. I scanned every one of their photos with my Betamax.

I taped the entire (very long) pre-planned ceremony, and I hoped I had enough battery power with me to catch all of it and have some left over. A guy from Letchworth stood near the flagpole and gave the longest speech. At the end of it he promised that the clearing the Park made for the event would be forever maintained so that the CCC alumni could picnic there any time they were in the neighborhood.

Then the entire crowd (about 100 people) drove to the Medina Sandstone shelter the CCC had built at Area #3 of Hamlin Beach State Park. Everyone munched on refreshments and chatted

about all the "boys" had accomplished at the Park back in the 1930s.



*Shelter #3 as it stands today, March 2025.*

I asked all of the CCC alumni in attendance to line up and walk through a doorway - one at a time - towards me and my camera. As they looked into the camera, I would ask them their names and to make a comment or two.

One Native American gentleman who was obviously displaying signs of dementia said, "They tell me I was here 50 years ago climbing around in the trees, but I don't remember a thing."

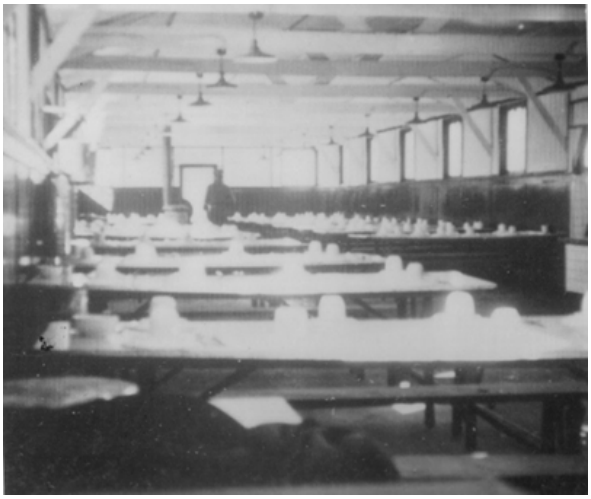


thm00102 Hamlin Municipal Historian Collection

*CCC guys saluting Retreat in front of the Barracks. Mary Smith made this into a postcard.*



*Inside a Barracks*



*Mess Hall*



*Rec Hall stage*

I witnessed almost all of the entire day with one eye closed and the other looking through a video camera and enjoyed playing back the tape so I could see the event with two eyes. I have since put the tape onto a DVD and I gave copies to the Park, the State, the Town of Hamlin, and Mary Smith.

# Closer Look At The Brief Peek

23 years have passed, and I can give an update on some of what transpired during that 1985 event. The Park manager at that time mentioned that he only removed brush from the site to create the clearing for the ceremony. But I have come by a photo showing the bulldozer that scraped away every inch of dirt where the CCC recreation building once sat and pushed it into a long, high berm to the west of what is now the small parking lot of the reclaimed camp. I have even talked with the man who drove the bulldozer. That berm later became the "bullet catcher" for a pistol range that was set up there for the Park Police to practice firing their guns.

The clearing was not maintained so that the CCC alumni could picnic there with family and friends. The following spring you couldn't even tell there had been a big ceremony there.

That could have been some of the original CCC flagpole laying on the ground at the edge of the clearing during the 1985 reunion but that was not all of it. The original flagpole was 60 to 70 feet tall, about nine inches in diameter, and was sawed off at ground level when the CCC camp became a POW camp. It was then re-erected at the SW corner of the camp for use by the POW camp guards. A matching flagpole was erected at the SE corner of the camp to be near the entrance to the POW camp. The re-erected (original) flagpole was cut down again sometime after the POW camp closed in January of 1946. The old flagpole got shorter again.

In 2016 I found some lag screws, and the gizmo the rope that pulled the flag up was wound around, at the exact spot an old photo shows the re-erected flagpole standing near a basketball backboard used by the guards.

The pulley system for the original flagpole was proudly on display at the 1985 event on the Area #3 shelter's patio floor for the 1985 CCC alumni to admire. I saw it! Also on display was the large sign that hung from a tall, iron pole at the west entrance to the CCC camp off Moscow Road. A real treasure! And I saw that too! But when I asked the Park people to let me photograph the hardware and the sign in 2008, they couldn't find it. [It's 2024 and they still haven't found it!]

# Getting In Position To Start The Project

A year or two after the 1985 reunion, I was still on the Hamlin Town Board. I tried to interest two of my fellow Board members in checking to see what was left of the old the camp, hidden in the "jungle." They agreed to attempt a walk into the brush with me. About 130 feet down the old entrance road into the CCC camp from Moscow Road we started our walk. We tried to walk east into the brush and brambles, but it was so dense we could only go about 200 feet without tearing our clothes.

We imagined seeing a long mound of dirt what might have been left over from the POW barbed wire fence but that was wishful thinking. We turned back without discovering a single artifact.

It would be 20 more years before the actual location of the fence would be discovered.

A short time later, I lost my bid for re-election to the Hamlin Town Board in 1987 by 42 votes. I was extremely disappointed to put it mildly. I thought I had done a good job serving the people of Hamlin, but politics won out. So, I quit politics. A couple of years later I changed my voter registration back to Republican and applied for a position on the Hamlin Conservation Board. I was accepted! That brought me back in contact with the old CCC camp site!

The State of New York had just accepted Hamlin's application for the very difficult to qualify for Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) and the Conservation Board was charged with the responsibility for all site inspections of any activities taking place within the boundaries of that LWRP. The old CCC camp site was within the boundaries of the LWRP and Policy # 21 said that the Town of Hamlin was to protect and preserve all historical sites within the boundaries of their LWRP.

About the same time (about 1991) I was diagnosed as a type two diabetic. To avoid having to take medication I opted to watch my diet and walk two miles a day in Hamlin Beach State Park. That required me to go by the CCC camp site every day (and I am still doing it 34 years later).

During those walks I became friends with the Park Police officer on duty, Sargent Roberts. He had found out that my wife was brought up in the same rural southern tier town he lived in - Centerville NY, Allegany County - and he knew her parents. He worked weeklong shifts at the park and went home on weekends. During the week he was billeted in the old farmhouse owned by the Park at 968 Moscow Road, next door to the CCC camp site. From him I learned a lot about the connection between that house, the people who lived in it in the 1930s, and the CCC camp (and the POW camp it turned into in 1943). He even showed me the old pot belly coal burning stove in the corner of the garage beside the old house where he parked his police car every night. It was one of the 15 such stoves that heated the five barracks in the old CCC camp. There is no record of where the other 14 stoves went.



*This is the farmhouse at 968 Moscow Road as seen from the main entrance to the CCC/POW camp.*

I passed along some of Sargent Robert's stories to my next-door neighbor on Hamlin Center

Road and found out that my neighbor lived in that same farmhouse when the CCC camp became a POW camp! He had artifacts that he shared with me and his stories were priceless. I like to pass along the story of him being in the upstairs bathroom[1] of the farmhouse at 968 Moscow Road in 1945 and hearing the only machine gun firing ever reported at the camp next door! He was nine years old, and he expected to see bodies being carried away the next morning. But there were none.

I was to hear about the machine gun incident again 25 years later but from a pen pal in Germany - a former WWII German POW who spent a year and a half in the Hamlin camp. He stood on the ground a short distance from the gun tower where the shots were being fired. His eyewitness version of the story debunked for me the local myths that had developed as the story got passed around.

I was learning about the old CCC site at a fantastic rate, and I had not yet even been able to walk through the jungle that had grown over it. Meanwhile, the park manager who "cleared" the section of the site for the 1985 reunion also found out that my wife was brought up in the same town in the southern tier that he grew up in - Centerville, again! And he liked to talk about seeing my wife and her sisters singing, Lennon Sisters style (Lawrence Welk's TV show), in talent contests. It also helped that he liked teachers, and he knew I was one.

I was no longer her liaison to the Town Board, but I shared all I was learning with Mary Smith, the town historian. I had a couple copies of the 50-page booklet she put together for her 1985 reunion and read through it and consulted it frequently. I would visit her often and she would show me through her extensive collection of photos and transcribed interviews with former CCC guys.

In the fall of 1995, I was led back into politics. The powers that be must have pretended I was always a Republican and picked me to run for the Town Board again. I had to win a primary first, but in 1996 I was the Town Historian's liaison to the Town Board again, AND liaison to the Conservation Board.

I went on most of their site inspections just as if I was still a member of the Conservation Board. A site inspection in early 1997 was a particularly memorable one. It had been reported that a couple dozen 55 gallon drums with no labels on them, and full of something, were partially hidden and sitting where the old CCC camp once stood. Since the CCC camp was within the boundaries of the LWRP the Conservation Board had to investigate. And I went with them.

I was surprised to see that the drums were sitting about where the 1985 CCC reunion ceremony had been held! A new Park Manager had recently taken over (also from the southern tier) and he was very cooperative. He did not know how the barrels had gotten there, and he let us investigate. He even took time to let us tour down the old CCC camp entrance road, to the north, much farther than anyone who had attended the 1985 reunion had been invited to venture. He did not appear to know a whole lot about the history of the site and let us wander on alone.

I know now where we walked but at the time it was just a lane through high grass and weeds with very thick and tall vegetation on both sides of two tire tracks. About 500 feet from Moscow Road the lane took a turn to the right and suddenly the lane was about 50 feet wide. Tall

[1] The upstairs bathroom window nine-year-old Gary Leverenz looked out from when he heard gun shots coming from the POW camp is under the eave to the right of the two upstairs windows in the picture of the farmhouse at 968 Moscow Road.

grass and weeds covered it but for some reason there were no trees or bushes growing on it to spoil the view.

The somewhat neat rows and piles of various construction items the park had decided to store to the left side of the lane ahead of us took my attention away from bothering to determine just how far the wide lane went. Clearly, the old CCC camp where nature hadn't taken over completely was now being used as a dump and a storage area by the State Park that owned it!

About 14 years later I would discover that the 50-foot-wide lane we were looking at was atop the 50-foot-wide packed gravel road the CCC built for their heavy trucks, and US Army trucks, to travel on. That road was so thick and hard that none of the trees common to the area could take root on it. The piles of materials seen stacked next to the lane sat on what was the cement floor of a washroom put up in a hurry for the German POWs in 1944 after a fire burned the CCC camp latrine to the ground.

# Temporarily Sidetracked

I retired from teaching after 33 years and events in 1998 and 1999 kind of drew my attention away from the CCC camp site. Being liaison to the Conservation Board got very busy. Violent storms on Lake Ontario in 1997 and 1998 were in the process of gobbling up 40 acres of a very important wetland at the east end of Hamlin Beach State Park - Yanty Marsh. Members of the Conservation Board had discussions about the problem during their meetings, but I was walking there every day. I could see the thin barrier of dirt, sand, gravel, and bushes and trees being torn up by giant waves and carried away. People up and down the shoreline on either side of Hamlin were losing their front yards at an alarming rate. Their boat docks and lawn furniture were being tossed into Yanty Marsh as more and more of its barriers were washed away.

I videotaped what was happening and wrote editorials in the local papers, trying to raise the alarm. Local TV stations joined in and two members of the Army Corps of Engineers out of Buffalo fed me information and made suggestions. The Conservation Board had contacts in big government and eventually several State agencies authorized an 1,830-foot-long stone wall to be put in place to save Yanty Marsh. I videotaped the wall being built and got to meet first hand many State government people. It all helped me to get re-elected to the Hamlin Town Board in 1999.

For the record, I did not know it at the time, but Yanty Marsh was a very important part of the original plan that brought the Civilian Conservation Corps to Hamlin Beach. In addition to turning a rundown county park into a state park, the CCC Master Plan for Hamlin included turning Yanty Marsh into a huge marina. I have a copy of the very detailed, professionally drawn, dated and labeled map of this part of the CCC project planned for Hamlin.

For the next four years the CCC camp was still kind of on my back burner. There were lots of town issues to contend with and they took up a lot of my time. I was still the liaison to the Conservation Board and the Town Historian, but I was also Deputy Supervisor. We needed a Library, and we needed a Courthouse. I continued to learn more about the CCC camp and the POW camp it turned into, but as long as no one was threatening to build something over it or a road through it, the LWRP was protecting it for future exploration.

Politics got hot and heavy again. I ran against the Town Supervisor in 2003 and lost. I applied for the Conservation Board again and was accepted again. A much better place for me to be!

For the next five years I was assigned to attend Town Board meetings but only to be able to report regularly at the scheduled Conservation Board meeting what went on at the last Town Board meeting. As a Conservation Board member, I was also appointed to chair a committee to work with the State of New York which was assigned to update the Town's LWRP as required. I walked onto the CCC/POW site every time the Conservation Board gave me an excuse to do so.

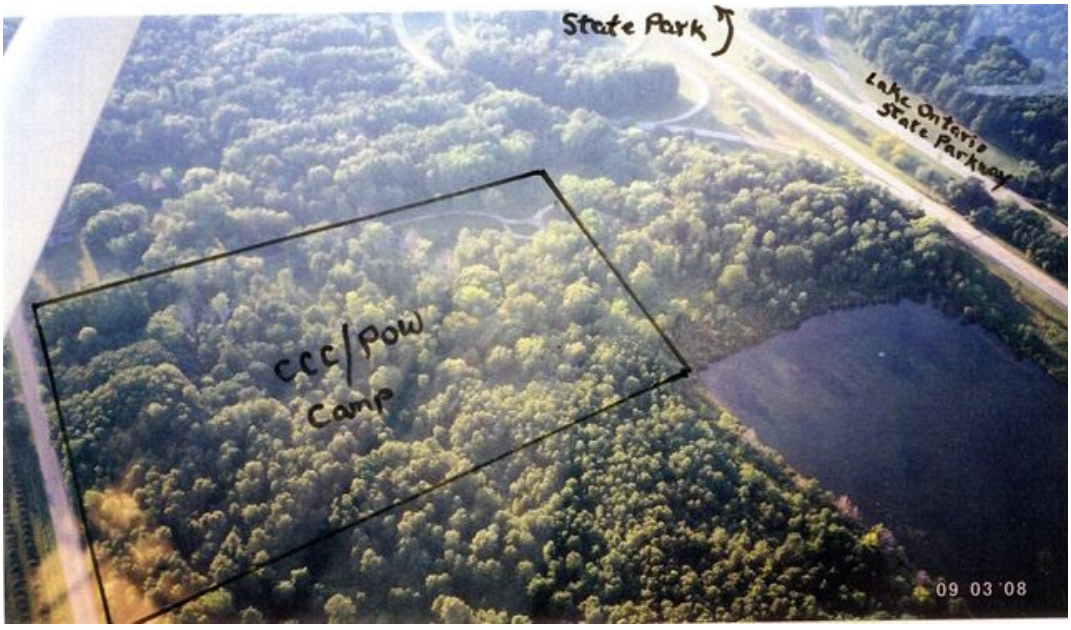
In 2008, I got an unexpected message from the Park saying that a brand-new Park Manager had just taken over and he wanted to see me. His name was Marty Howden and shortly after he arrived someone warned him to "watch out for the short, blond guy who kept sticking his nose in park business." He told me that it was that warning that prompted him to send me the

invitation. I thought the meeting was going along nicely when all of a sudden, he asked me if I knew anything about an old CCC and German POW camp that was on park property.

I immediately became suspicious. The park people had been telling me for years to keep out of there because there was nothing left there to see. But then he asked me if I thought the site could be made into a history trail. I thought for a few seconds and said "yeah." Then he said, "Would you be willing to help?"

Wow! That was June 8, 2008, and the very next day my wife, my son and I took our loppers and pruning saws to the site and began clearing!

Marty and I became good friends after that. I learned that he was the sign painter at Letchworth State Park before coming to Hamlin as Park Manager and had designed, built, and painted the big Yanty Marsh sign that went up after the wall that saved the marsh was completed. I also learned that he lived down the road from Centerville and that my wife's sister had been his art teacher in Fillmore Central High School.




*In September of 2008 a former student of Ed's flew him over the site, and he took this picture with his camera. The farmhouse at 968 Moscow Road is in the left center of the picture just outside the drawn in lines of the camp. From this picture you can see how much Mother Nature took over the site. You will hear more about the pond on the right of the picture as you continue reading.*

# Slow Going At First

At that time, I didn't have a site plan to go by. The night before the clearing began, I got out two of the covers Mary Smith had made for her 50-page booklet for the 1985 reunion. A 6"x4" copy of an aerial photo of the CCC camp taken about 1938 was on the covers and with a




magnifying glass and a metric ruler I developed a distance scale for them. The paper used for the cover was colored card stock - not glossy and not photo store quality - but it was all I had. And I knew that my distance scale would not work across the entire photo because of the camera angle so the best I could come up with were approximate figures.

Fortunately, there were some things in the photo that were still visible on the ground. I could measure the distance between the two entrance driveways into the CCC site along Moscow Road and equate real feet to the millimeters on the photo. The road behind the farmhouse and barn was also "still there" and I could get another "real feet" measurement to equate to millimeters on the photo. Using this crude method I determined how far north of Moscow Road the first CCC camp road across the front of the camp must have been. Then I measured down the western entrance driveway into the site that same number of mm to feet distance and began clearing. I drove a tall wooden post into the ground to mark the location.



Then I went to the eastern entrance driveway into the CCC site and measured the same distance down it from Moscow Road. That entrance to the old camp was easy to locate because it was marked with a locked gate, but the entrance road was terribly overgrown. After forcing my way down the entrance driveway the pre-calculated distance, I drove another tall wooden post into the ground. Now all we had to do was to clear all the brush between the two posts and we would have the beginning of a history trail!

The problem was we couldn't see the eastern post while standing at the western post and vice versa. Too much jungle in between. But we started lopping and sawing at the western post to begin a six-foot-wide path in the general direction of the eastern post. It was slow work, and we threw all the cut brush out of our way towards Moscow Road (along with my new Casio watch). That area only served the CCC camp as a tree nursery anyway.



*The first artifact found at the site where Street #1 begins. The tire from a CCC truck.*

Right away we began to find artifacts. I should have expected it. Mary Smith was supplying me with documents from her CCC/POW camp files and I had just read that when the camp closed all kinds of junk was brought to that corner of the camp to be picked over by salvagers from Rochester. They didn't take it all.

We had to check to make sure we were heading straight towards the eastern post every day and that required walking out ahead of the path we were clearing. Eventually we got close to the center of the roadway we hoped we were clearing. Then the corners of two sections of cement, three feet by three feet (resembling sections of sidewalk) suddenly appeared sticking out from under four or five inches of dirt. Also scattered about the area around the cement slabs were pieces of coal. It became a "hoo-rah" moment.

I figured that the cement probably had something to do with the long, center building in the row of five buildings seen in the aerial photo and parallel to Moscow Road. For one thing, those buildings in the photo had coal boxes near their southern entrances. After making a measurement, I concluded that they were indeed part of the entrance into the center building off the roadway we were clearing! Contrary to State Park Management opinion, there was for sure something left of the original CCC camp still there!!!

That area became the center of our attention for a while. Artifacts were found there (including some heavy gauge copper wire that was coming up out of the ground nearby) and we knew we were halfway to the east post. Clearing in that direction speeded up. As soon as we could see the eastern wooden post, we drove more tall wooden posts between the east and west posts to clearly mark the first east/west walkway across the CCC camp.

Marty had been coming to the site after his regular Park Manager hours were over and was working alone clearing the east entrance into the camp off Moscow Road. He was finding artifacts, too. It was apparent that stuff was also dumped for pickers at that corner of the camp after it closed. Marty was hell bent on getting to the CCC Mess Hall.

Finally, now that we knew for sure where an actual building once sat, and since we now knew where the center of the roadway we were clearing was, we wanted to fine tune our measurements. For that we punched a rough path due south from the newly discovered cement slabs to Moscow Road to get that measurement.

At the same time, we knew that somewhere due north was the center of the camp where the flagpole stood. But the place where the building belonging to the cement slabs once sat - now a long dent in the ground - was completely full of downed trees - huge trees! In front of that mess there were two huge piles of what looked like creosoted railroad ties. They were in fact what used to be a fence along a section of the Lake Ontario Parkway. Like the oil drums, they were a gift of the NYSDOT (Department of Transportation). We improvised a route for "agile people only" over the downed trees and across the top of the pile of old fencing to explore the area.

This was the first actual CCC building site we were to document. I identified it as the 80-foot-long Department of Interior Building - a kind of barracks for VIPs. Unlike the barracks for the CCC boys, this building had indoor plumbing, and we actually found some of the sewer pipes belonging to the site. We tried to get as much overgrowth off the site as possible. But the huge trees would have to wait.

Actually, we kind of paused in that area for a while. In fact, we asked Marty if it was possible to get a picnic table to that area so we had a place to sit and rest while we worked that area. One day later, the Park's John Deere Gator made its way through the path we had hacked to Moscow Road with a picnic table on its back. Marty made our wish come true.

# A Giant Leap

About this time, we were contacted by SUNY Brockport. One of their freshmen courses required that students spend a certain number of hours doing community service of some kind. SUNY asked if there was something their students could sign up to do at the CCC site.

I thought it was time to start clearing the long walkway across the camp on the north side of the front row of five buildings. Mary Smith had shared with me ten or so photos she had taken with her 35 mm camera of the photos the CCC alumni had put out on picnic tables at the 1985 reunion (e.g. photos of photos but before smart phones). I had them copied and enlarged.

One of the photos was of Al Chike, a CCC inductee who had recently passed away. Al was shown leaving what I now know was the Recreation Building and pausing on the walkway I wanted to clear, while someone took his picture. He had a big smile on his face. In one hand he had what looked like a bar of soap and a towel was draped over his shoulders. Behind him, in the distance, you could see the barn behind the neighboring farmhouse and the small, round, white framed window at the peak of the barn was directly over Al's right shoulder.



A little later on, after most local citizens had heard about the project, the daughter of Al Chike gave me the entire collection of photographs Al had taken when he lived in the Hamlin camp. The photo of Al Chike with the barn in the background was one of them.

The barn was still there in 2008, and I used the little round window at the peak to locate the spot in the "jungle" where Al must have been standing in the 1938 photo. That showed me where on the west CCC entrance driveway the walkway began, and I marked it with a tall wooden stake. I would have the SUNY kids start clearing to the east from there!



I remember about 16 students - boys and girls - showing up and gave them a little background talk about the CCC program of the 1930s and what I thought they might be uncovering here. Then I armed a few of them with loppers and folding pruning saws. The rest of the students carried away the cut brush.

They worked like they were in some kind of a race. At first the cut brush was thrown into the swamp to the west on the entrance road (behind us) but as the cleared path got longer, we had to start making piles. We tried hard not to clutter up the areas to either side because those areas would someday have to be cleared, too.

A real shot of adrenaline came when they uncovered their first artifact. A couple of pop cans among a scattered array of rectangular, flat, Medina Sandstone chunks suddenly appeared. They were in the middle of the path they were

clearing and looked at first, like so much junk. The cans were old but not as old as the sandstone. I instructed the kids to not move anything!



A few days later Sue found another artifact next to their Medina sandstone discovery - a 3'x3' cement slab identical to the two found at the middle of the other east/west walkway a short time ago. Many of the 1930s CCC buildings had sheltered entryways and each of these entryways had a cement floor - 3'x3' cement slabs. So, the SUNY students had found something associated with another CCC building!

This particular building was a U.S. Army administration building that contained a supply room and quarters for the guy who ran it. Later on, I made more discoveries in that area that would eventually help put together a part of a story linking together the CCC camp and the POW camp it turned into in 1943. It was a reminder that we were uncovering not one camp, but TWO different camps at the same time!

As it turns out, the Medina sandstone pieces the students found were parts of one of the State Park drinking fountains the CCC boys fabricated in the nearby barn during the winter months when they couldn't work outside. This particular drinking fountain "kit" was never used in the park and was taken from the barn in 1943 or 1944 and assembled inside the former CCC supply building - without cementing the pieces together. POW guards assigned to that building probably did the moving. It is quite likely that they placed it under a faucet fastened to the west wall of the building. Sometime during the dismantling of the POW camp in the late 1940s, the drinking fountain was taken apart and tossed onto the walkway for the SUNY students to find.

Sue also found a guy wire anchor near the drinking fountain "kit" and the cement slab. There was some guy wire still fastened to it, and it remained a mystery until much later when more of the POW camp artifacts finally showed up. Sue would eventually find a total of four of those guy wire anchors!

That day, the SUNY students made it almost to the middle of the camp where my wife Sue and I had been working to make the outline of the Department of Interior Building easier to visualize. It would take a couple of days and create another huge brush pile but we finished the kids' work and connected it to the line we were trying to clear to the center of the CCC camp.

That connection inspired me to look down the path with the old photo in my hand showing Al Chike standing on that path - the photo that told us where to start clearing - the photo of Al with the barn behind him. There were rounded rocks in the photo and as luck would have it, those same rocks could be seen on the ground in front of me! Even the rock in the background at the edge of the entrance road!

Over the next two years, Brockport State would send us several more groups of students. During one of those work parties my heart got to racing when I heard from some distance behind me a student yelling at the top of his lungs. "Oh no! Someone had

gotten hurt!" I turned around and saw the top half of one of the boys waving his arms. As I ran to him, I saw that he was standing in a hole. Clearing away a thick honeysuckle bush a square hole appeared and he jumped into it. He knew he had found something important, and he wanted all of us to see it!

I was relieved to see that he was not hurt and together we all gathered around for further investigation of the hole. It turned out to be the beginning of the long sewer line that ran from the south end of the camp to the north end of the camp. The student had been standing in a square, cement manhole whose wooden lid had rotted away, and dirt had half filled it. When it was later dug out, all kinds of mysteries were eventually solved!



New CCC Camp at Hamlin Beach Park, in Monroe County northwest of Rochester on Lake Ontario, will be opened sometime in August. A panorama of the camp is shown in the picture, above. At the left are dormitories for the 206 boys who will occupy the camp; right center is the mess hall; at right, officers quarters and lot- estry buildings; center, the assembly grounds. In the picture below, workmen and supervisors inspecting a section of the 2,000 feet of sewer being laid. They are (left to right) First Sergeant John T. Schuman of Rochester, headquarters company, 391st Infantry; First Lieutenant Elwood H. Neener of 135 Anthony Street, 391st Infantry, and Lynn B. Sellers of Camp Dix, N. J.

**Monroe's First CCC Camp Nears Finish; Located in State Park at Hamlin Beach**

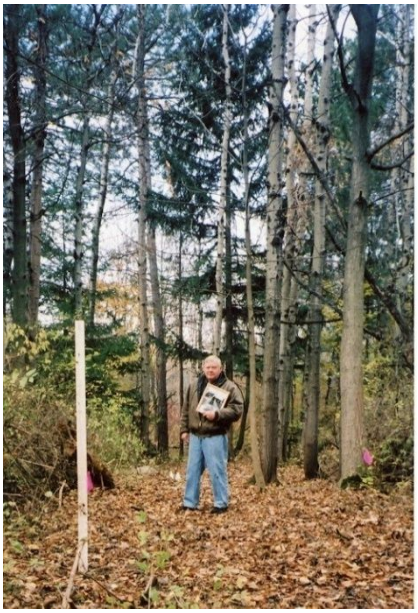
*Rochester Times Union article, July 27, 1935, New CCC Camp at Hamlin Beach Nears Completion. Workman and supervisors inspecting a section of the 2,000 feet of sewer being laid. Left to right: First Sergeant John T. Schuman of Rochester, headquarters company, 391st Infantry; First Lieutenant Elwood H. Neener of 135 Anthony St, 391st Infantry; and Lynn B. Sellers of Camp Dix, NJ. The west face of the mess hall is at the back of the picture. The is the pipe going to the distribution box in the CCC sewer system that was later found by a SUNY Brockport student during the clearing of the site.*



*SUNY Brockport students helping to clear the southwest corner of the camp.*



*SUNY students clearing the site near the center of the camp.*



*Ed standing on the exact same spot CCC inductee Al Chike stood in the 1938 photo that located the site of Street #2 for the 2008 clearing crew. Ed is holding a framed enlargement of the Al Chike photo.*

# Another Regular Worker Becomes Part Of The Team

Nick Kramer came to my house to visit one day. He was a Special Ed teacher who had just retired from Hilton Central School. For many years I had accepted Nick's students into my very special remedial science class, and he was going through the retirement re-orientation we all go through. Nick had heard about the work Sue and I were doing at the CCC camp and asked if there was something he could do to help.

Sue and I invited him to meet us at the site the next day. We led him to the picnic table Marty had provided at the center of the east/west roadway we had cleared. We set up a portable gas grill and had a little hot dog picnic while I explained to Nick what we were doing. Nick said he was having some back problems but was sure he could do something to help out.

After the grill was folded up, we handed him a set of loppers and went to the north end of the dead tree filled Department of Interior building site. We told Nick that the center of the CCC camp was due north, somewhere over the top of the huge pile of railroad tie-like beams. To the west was the end of the path the SUNY kids had cleared. To the east is where we wanted to go next - through a super-dense wall of overgrowth which was hiding another trunk of a gigantic tree that had fallen to the ground somewhat parallel to the new path we wanted to clear. Our new path would eventually intersect the path Marty had finally made to the Mess Hall site from Moscow Road. Our path would be an extension of the SUNY's path to the east.

Sue stayed there to work with Nick, and I went to the Mess Hall end of the planned route. Sue and Nick couldn't see me, and I couldn't see them. Every once in a while we shouted at each other to make sure we were clearing along the same line. Many shouts and many work breaks later, we met somewhere in the middle. Once again, the east and the west driveways into the CCC camp had been joined by paths that ran straight across the entire camp!

I thought for sure that would be the last time we saw Nick at the site. But he showed up again and again after that and he is still working at the site in 2024. In fact, about three weeks after the hot dog picnic, his back problems went away. He asked his doctor about it and the doctor told him he was probably using an entirely different set of muscles with the work he had been doing and that took the pressure off the damaged muscles. I jokingly tell people that Nick is still working at the site because he is afraid his back problems will come back if he quits working at the site!



*Bill and Nick (right) hard at work.*

# The Word Spreads

Shortly thereafter, Marty got a call from a guy in Spencerport who heard about the project and wanted to set up an interview with him and me. He was a member of a group called "The Wednesday Morning Clearing Crew." Once a month they got together and put in a Wednesday morning clearing brush in parks in the area. This guy wanted to see if our project was worth their time.

Marty and I met with the guy, Dan Wilson, and two other members of the crew in Marty's Park office. Dan asked all kinds of questions and then, after a nod from his buddies, told us they'd be at the site next Wednesday.

That morning, about 20 people showed up. Two of them were ladies. Of course, Nick joined us. Everyone brought their own tools of choice. I introduced myself and gave them a short talk about the CCC, our CCC camp, and what we were trying to do. Then I motioned towards the area between the two east/west paths across the old camp that had recently been cleared and told them it was now time to clear the area between it. I pointed at the place where my family and I started clearing in June and where the SUNY students had started their work. From then on no one said a word. They worked like they owned the place and never took a break. Everyone seemed to have their own plan, and no one got in anyone else's way.

Dan had his own plan, too. He had a gasoline powered weed-whacker with a skill saw blade on the end. When he put on his hearing protector and fired it up, everyone backed away! He waved it around in front of him and brush fell like crazy. If you yelled at him, he couldn't hear you. It was a dangerous situation, but he was doing the work of half a dozen people. Everyone just stayed clear, and I stood behind him just to make sure others kept clear.

We had been told by Marty that we could not use chain saws because the State required that anyone using a chain saw on State property had to have a card that said they had taken a particular course and passed it. Luckily, two of the Wednesday Morning Clearing Crew had that card and they were both there that morning. They went ahead of the rest of the crew and cut up the fallen trees into pieces that could be rolled out of the way. What a blessing that was. I couldn't wait until they got to the Department of Interior building!

Before noon, they had worked all the way up to and including the building site between the Supply Building the SUNY kids helped locate and the Department of Interior Building site. That building was one of the two short buildings in the front row parallel to Moscow Road. The CCC used it as a construction office - a place to lay out and study blueprints. When the camp became a POW camp that building became the Commandant's Office.

Artifacts kept showing up again disproving the previous park managers who kept telling me to "stay out of there because there is nothing left of the old CCC camp." At the short building site alone I photographed stove pipe, asbestos that protected the floor under the stove, hardware scraps, and part of the stone stoop where the south door once opened.

All of the cut brush produced was dragged to the area between the first path we had cleared and Moscow Road. No new piles were made. The transformation of the site that took place that morning was magnificent! After working for about two and one-half hours no command was

given but everyone quit working at the same time and started back to their cars. They were off to the nearest diner for lunch. I excused myself but Nick had made a lot of new friends that day and went along with them. I think that was the day Dan and Nick bonded.

There was a downside that morning. The neighbor across the street called the Park Office again to complain. This time it was the noise. I have no idea what Marty told him.

# Property Line Problems

The neighbor who owned the woods to the east of the CCC property had noticed that the government issued topographic map quadrangle for that area showed that the eastern property line for the CCC camp was 10 feet onto the neighbor's land. Consequently, the GPS system had it that way too. Before we started work no one had noticed it. The neighbor complained. Now the Park was forced to have the property surveyed.

With great difficulty Marty walked the entire property line in question looking for the original cement State property markers. On his second walk, I joined him. We found some interesting stuff close to the Lake Ontario State Parkway, a tall piece of iron reinforcing rod sticking up halfway between there and Moscow Road, and a hunter's tree stand overlooking the CCC site, but little else. The iron rod was clearly on the neighbor's property, and we could find nothing to indicate a reason for it being there. The tree stand would be focused on again, later.

In preparation for the arrival of the surveyors, Marty had his second in command run a brush hog the entire length of the disputed property line. All kinds of neat stuff showed up! Some of it was clearly there when the CCC camp became a POW camp. When the brush hog driver opened up a view of the large pond off the NE corner of the site, the fisherman in him went nuts! He had no idea it was there. He took a right-hand turn with the brush hog and cleared a 12-foot-wide path all the way to the shore of the pond.




That path is still being maintained by the Park. The pond would eventually be named "Howden Pond" by the Hamlin Conservation Board.

It would take a couple of months for the surveyors to finish their work and issue a report. But they found in favor of the Park! The topographic map was wrong, and the Park owned over 10 more feet of land to the east of the brush hogged path! The entire fiasco had other positives, too.

Marty had already cleared a lot of the area to the south end of the Mess Hall by himself after he opened up the east entrance to the camp. He was particularly proud of finding the only power pole in the camp still standing with many wires hanging from it. By then, Dan and Nick were coming to the site on their own and had opened up that area even more. The brush hog's drive-by made Marty's cleared area bigger and neater, and chewed up a bunch of brush.



Marty also used the brush hogged path to scout out the entire east side of the camp. It was

suddenly a fast and easy walk along that entire east side of the camp. On one of those scouting missions, he fought his way over 200 feet into the "jungle" to the west of the brush hogged path and discovered three cement slabs identical to those we found at the front of the camp. He had picked up a 1950s pop bottle on his trudge and put it on one of the slabs as a kind of marker. To make sure he could find the spot again he took notice of an odd shaped, very old, fat, white birch tree and made a mental note of where the bottle stood with respect to that tree



I don't remember the brand name of the pop, but it was the first diet pop I ever tasted as a kid. Sweetened with saccharin, it had an awful after taste.

When Marty told me about the three slabs my son, Jesse, and I walked down the brush hogged path to investigate. After showing my fisherman son the pond we looked for the white birch tree.

The tree looked so out of place where it stood it didn't take us too long to find the pop bottle.

I had no idea what the cement slabs might be part of. The buildings in the aerial photo I studied looked like they could only accommodate one, maybe two, of the cement slabs. This group of three was weird. I thought that the latrine site had to be somewhere around there. Perhaps the slabs might be part of it. Jesse tilted one of the slabs to the side so I could see under it. The slab was not covering a hole. The slabs sat on packed gravel. Oh well for now!

We had brought along loppers, and we prepared to clear a six-foot-wide path from the slabs, due east, straight to the brush hogged path. Jesse started cutting brush at the location of the slabs. I went back to the brush hogged path and started cutting brush towards him. Every once in a while, we shouted at each other to make sure we were going to eventually meet in the middle. We couldn't see each other at all. After 30 or 40 minutes we met but it was not in the middle. He was over 30 years younger than me and cleared twice as much of the new path as I did!

On another stroll down the brush hogged path, Marty and I decided to take a short cut back to our cars. Starting at the end of the path Jesse and I had cleared, Marty and I headed SW through the jungle. It was extremely slow going. A species of wild rose grew everywhere and because of the huge barbs on the branches we named it "shark's teeth on a stick." What a mess! We thought we could see through the treetops to where the clearing in front of the cars might be and kept weaving and bending and ducking in that general direction. We had to walk around a 15-foot-long, wide, deep trench. There was a huge, steep sided pile of dirt next to it. Hmmmm. About 20 minutes later we got to the tiny parking lot. Pooped.

# A Visit From John Deere

The Clearing Crew had put on another Wednesday morning show. The mass of fallen trees in the dent in the ground the Department of Interior building once sat on were all cut into large pieces. The big stuff at the Infirmary site and the Army Officers' building also got cut up. All five of the building sites at the front of the camp were now ready to be made pretty!

All kinds of artifacts showed up and the Clearing Crew was very careful not to disturb them. I flagged several plumbing items that belonged to the Infirmary. The 3x3 cement slab that should have been at the north door of the Department of Interior building was finally found off-center and smashed under a large log. [It is still there, just as we found it.] The dent in the ground where the Army Officers' building stood turned out to be unusually deep. Many who saw it joined the gang of thinkers who had been trying to figure out how the dents in the ground were created when the buildings were all originally built on flat ground!

The Clearing Crew who worked without chain saws cut the small stuff and tossed it in the woods between the camp and Moscow Road. Tidying up went on for a couple more days through the efforts of Dan and Nick. But the huge chunks the men with the saw made were still eyesores.

On a semi-regular basis, I had been reporting progress at the site to my neighbor across the street from me - Walt Fisher on Hamlin Center Road. Walt, a retired Kodak employee, had recently purchased one of those John Deere oversized lawn tractors. It was one of those you hooked up the 60-inch mower deck by driving over it. It came with a hydraulic bucket on the front and a backhoe you turned the seat around to operate. He also had a big flat-bed trailer and a big SUV to haul it around.



Walt said he thought he could move those big chunks for us. I had him fill out one of those forms the Park required of all volunteers and he drove his new toy to the CCC site. Dan, Nick, my wife and I gathered around as he sized up the situation. I showed him where he could not drive because of known or possible artifacts, and he went to work.

Those chunks he couldn't coax into the bucket were rolled towards Moscow Road. Some chunks had to be wrapped with heavy duty nylon straps and dragged. The first dent in his new tractor was made when a log rolled out of the raised bucket and rolled backwards onto the hood. I felt bad for Walt, but he just kept working.

The two chain saw guys had supplied us with more chunks than could be moved in one day. Walt would come back a few times. While he was doing his thing, the rest of us were doing our thing - tidying up the front of the camp and the south end of the Mess Hall site. When Walt was done for the day, he gave us a bonus. He'd throw some of those railroad tie Parkway fence sections onto his trailer along with the tractor and haul them away.

That pile of railroad ties got smaller and smaller until the pile was completely gone. Walt drove them to Hamlin Center stacked them neatly behind his house. What a guy! I don't remember how many days it took but he even disposed of the half-rotted ones. And this wasn't the only time Walt saved the day for us.





*Cleared site view from southeast corner of camp (on street #2) looking towards the old farmhouse at 968 Moscow Road.*

# Keys To Some Of The CCC Camp Mysteries Arrive

Even before Walt started doing the heavy work, and shortly before the pile of railroad ties disappeared, I had been trying to locate the exact location of the CCC flagpole. Mary Smith had been supplying me with old documents related to the CCC camp and one of them was an inventory of all the buildings in the CCC camp when it closed in 1941. The inventory even included the measurements of the buildings. Now that I knew where the cement slabs in front of or behind a couple of the buildings at the front of the camp were, knowing the exact sizes of the buildings enabled me to estimate the approximate locations of all five of the front buildings with some certainty.



With all the buildings now located, every time something new turned up during the clearing process, I re-did my flag pole arithmetic, unreeled my 100-foot tape, and refined my guess at where the location of the flagpole might have been. Over a period of a week, I had moved that stake a few feet, three or four times. With each new guess, I relocated a wooden stake that I had fitted with a long landscaping spike on the end.

One afternoon when everyone else had gone home, I made another calculation and prepared to move the stake three feet to the west. I could only get the spike to go into the ground a few inches. Must have hit a rock? I moved the stake a couple of inches to either side. It still wouldn't go into the ground. I stabbed the ground with the spike here and there, harder and harder. That must be one heck of a rock!

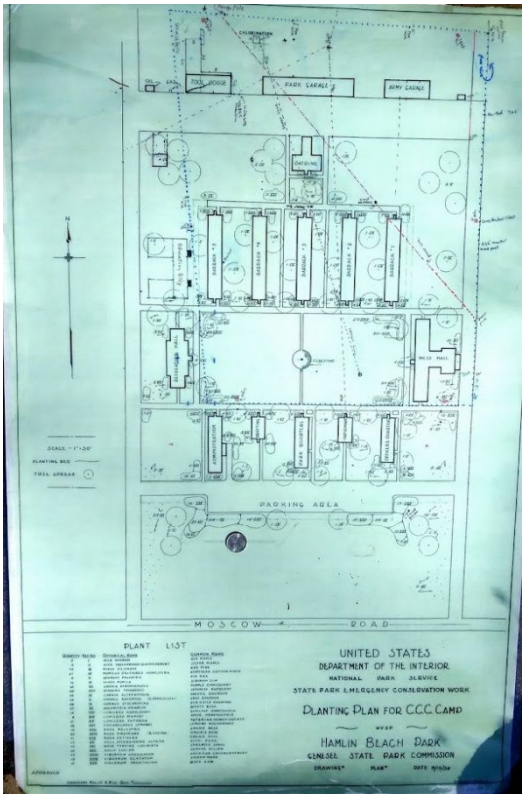
I went to my truck and got a hoe. I scraped away the dirt where I was trying to put the stake and discovered that a rock wasn't the problem. The hoe was uncovering cement! Then I really went to town with the hoe. When I was done, I had uncovered a circle of cement about four feet across with a 10-inch or so hole in the center. The hole was filled to the top with a wooden stump. I had just uncovered what was left of the CCC flagpole!

I didn't pretty up the area. The Park had dumped a bunch of junk there. The biggest piece was the remains of a kids' playground platform with a broken railing and attachments. About three feet away was my wooden stake. I went home to get Sue to come back with me and take a picture of my find. After I fastened a small flag on the top of my wooden post I posed for the picture. And that became the main topic of every conversation I had with anyone for about a week!

Now I could locate on the ground, almost everything shown in the aerial photo on the cover of Mary Smith's 50-page 1985 CCC Reunion booklet. I had a 600-foot roll of venetian blind cord, and I used it to flag a line from the back door of the Department of interior building, through the flagpole, into what had to be the front door of Barracks #3 and out the back door, all the way to the front door of the latrine! Then I used a gizmo I had made to make 90 degree turns from any measurement and flagged a line from the front door of the Mess Hall, through the flagpole, all the way to the front door of the Recreation building and beyond! We hadn't even tried to locate those

buildings yet but the flagpole finding suddenly made the impossible, possible!

Very shortly thereafter, Marty came back from Letchworth with two copies of the original "Planting Plan for the Hamlin CCC Camp" - one for him and one for me. It was three feet long by two feet wide and featured a to-scale drawing of the layout of most of the CCC camp. I no longer had to estimate the locations of the CCC buildings. With the flagpole site I found and this document I could find the EXACT locations of all of the buildings! The bushes and shrubs marked on the plan were of no use to me, but the outlines of the buildings were priceless. From then on, every time I found something new at the site, I marked it on the Planting Plan.




Marty also gave us access to the two garages belonging to the old farmhouse. We had told Marty that we needed a place to store our tools so that we didn't have to keep transporting them back and forth to the site. The long garage used to be where Sargent Roberts parked the Park Police car when he was billeted in the farmhouse. The little garage was stuffed full of junk. We installed our own combination padlocks on the entrance doors and gave Marty the combinations so that Park employees could get into them if they needed to.

# Our Secret Weapon - Super Dan

The long garage needed a little work. Every time it rained, six-inch deep water covered half the floor. The big door didn't open and close properly because the building had started to lean to the north. And the lights didn't work.

Dan made some strange gizmos in his shop and installed them around the front of the building. [He was a retired tool and die maker and still did odd jobs on the side.] When he got done working all the nuts and bolts with his wrenches the building was suddenly straight, and the doors worked fine.

Nick dug trenches around the garage and it no longer flooded. The antique electrical system needed some odd-sized, old-style fuses and I managed to buy a few. Dan wanted a workbench in there to repair broken tools we had been sending home with him. The back corner of the garage was the perfect spot, but the corner wasn't perfectly square and the floor was very uneven. But he built one.

And he built it at home. He spent a long-time making measurements of the odd corner of the garage and over a few days manufactured the sturdiest workbench I ever saw. It had a stainless-steel top fashioned from some junked toilet stall dividers he found in the little garage, and he put a $350 vise on the left front corner. In spite of the out of square corner and the uneven floor, it fit perfectly when he brought it from home and pushed it into place!

The walls of the garage up to the height of the top of the bench were of cobblestone and cement and there was a big crack in it where the back of the bench was to go. Dan had even rigged, at home, a special fastener on the back corner of the bench that fixed the crack and secured the bench at the same time. He was an expert mechanic. He was amazing!

All this time he was still clearing the parts of the site he was most interested in. And he was always ready to quit what he was doing to go over to help someone else. On one of his visits to the garage Dan spotted a pile of long, metal posts - the type highway departments fasten reflectors on to mark the edges of pavement so that snowplows know where to plow. These had all been struck with a snowplow and were bent way out of shape. Like the railroad ties, this was to be their last resting place.

Dan started taking them home, a few at a time. He'd straighten them, bring them back looking like new, and then take another bunch home. [I recall only two that could not be saved.] With the help of Marty's Planting Plan and the flag pole site I began marking the exact locations of all of the CCC building sites we cleared with Dan's straightened posts. I replaced all of the tall wooden poles that I had been using.

Each metal post I drove into the ground marked two things - the center of a building AND the far edge of the walkway (driveway) going by that

Dan lived alone and was in his 70s. He was not an ounce overweight, but he did have some health issues he only gave us a few clues about. I do know he was in the process of having all of his teeth replaced with implants and he wore some kind of electronic device that was supposed to tune out pain. He didn't carry much to eat in his bagged lunches, but he was a big drinker of strong coffee and loved sweets. Dan was in his glory when Tim Horton's opened a store directly across the street from his house. He became their most regular customer.

building. The posts were so tall you could stand at the beginning of the path we cleared first back in 2008, and see the post at the far end, where the east entrance to the camp passed that path. And the line of posts between the end posts was perfectly straight. Then I marked the centers of the same buildings at their north end of the row of five buildings.

Dan had an expensive chain saw and knew how to use it. He suddenly thought it was time to take the State required course so he could operate a chain saw in the Park between visits of the Clearing Crew. Dan checked around and enrolled in a chain saw course being offered near the Pennsylvania border. It was a two-day event, and he paid for everything out of his own pocket.

When he returned, he told us the course had been attended by a bunch of young men who treated him like a very old man. One of the things he had to do early in the course was drop a crooked tree as close as he could towards a wire flag stuck in the ground. He said he hit the flag dead center and won a pair of leggings. Before the course was over, Dan won every prize offered and only felt guilty for a few minutes.

And Dan didn't waste any time getting back to work. With his chain saw certification in hand, Dan would eventually finish the clearing of the fallen trees in the Mess Hall site. The Park crew had already removed one huge cherry tree that stretched all the way from the back door of the Mess Hall to the front of the building near its SW corner. Walt took care of most of the pieces of sawed up cherry tree and Dan dedicated himself to clearing the entire site with Nick as his assistant.

It would be no easy job. The Mess Hall was 112 feet long with a large wing off the center of the east side that once housed the food preparation and serving area, (three) ten-hole, cast iron, coal burning, cooking ranges and the dish washing system. Dan even rounded up the pieces of the busted-up cement and cinder block loading dock that once sat outside the back door to the kitchen and arranged them in such a way that some crew in the future could easily put them back where they came from. When Dan was done, the site stood out like a sore thumb. An extremely deep dent in the ground glorified the entire area where the former Mess Hall once stood!

Once, while trying to use the fallen tree as a bridge across the site, I slipped off it and stepped into some very soft stuff that filled my hiking boots and pant cuffs. Later that day I noticed a rash up and down one leg and lots of little sores. I never did find out what the little critters were, but I treated the entire site with respect after that. I kept one big piece of that cherry tree as a souvenir - a piece 18 inches high and 12 inches across, perfect for an end table someday.



*Dan sawing up seventy-year-old dead trees.*

# Early Visitors To The Site

As word about the clearing of the site spread, all kinds of people showed up to see what was going on. Reporters from the small local newspapers and the Rochester D&C saw to that. One of the TV stations even paid a visit. Marty sent a crew from Hamlin Beach State Park for a visit, and they brought their woodchipper to help clean up some piles of brush. The chipper broke down, but it was a nice gesture.

The Supervisor of the Town of Hamlin showed up with his wife while the Mess Hall site was being uncovered, and she promptly discovered a bowl that had been part of the Mess Hall's collection.





*Town Supervisor Tom Breslawski proudly holds the bowl his wife discovered and crawled under the cherry tree root ball to get. It is in perfect shape!*

It was in perfect shape and the Syracuse, NY, logo of the manufacturer was clearly visible as well as a 1941 date. While she was there, we also picked up several broken dishes and a gravy boat. I gave the broken dishes to Mary Smith to put in her History Center display.

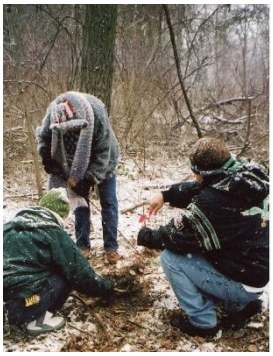
Mary Smith herself paid a visit - her one and only visit. I took her picture as she stood proudly in the spot where Al Chike had stood when he had that photo taken of him with the towel over his shoulder and the barn clearly visible behind him.

David Walch, the chairman of the Hamlin Conservation Board lived down the road and paid a visit. Marty wanted to start a Friends of the State Park organization like the ones most of his fellow park managers had and David Walch's visit ended up getting him appointed President of a brand-new Friends of Hamlin Beach State Park.

Two Boy Scouts from Morton (down the road) - the Vogt brothers, Josh and Zach - wanted to do some work at the site to help them earn a merit badge. I gave them the standard intro talk about the site, and they were hooked. They worked very hard at an uncleared area close to the Mess Hall. A year later they came back again. And a year after that they were back again. Eventually they both did an Eagle Project for the CCC site. Of course, both became Eagle Scouts, and I was invited to their inductions.

They each gave the site a shed for the volunteers to keep their tools in. Someday, I hope the park will install a plaque in the sheds in their honor.

I took my daughter Tanya, who lives in North Carolina, and her husband Steve, to the site. Within 15 minutes they discovered three artifacts at a CCC building site we had missed! I continue to send her updates on our progress.



*Tanya (left), Sue and Steve (right) where Tanya found an artifact.*

A former next-door neighbor of mine, Gary Leverenz, visited the site because he lived in the farmhouse next to the site when the camp was a German POW camp. Back then he never ventured onto the site and wanted to see it from the inside. [He was the lad

who heard the machine gun firing during a visit to the bathroom.] I would be chatting with him several more times as the project progressed.

The Spencerport BOCES program sent a group of 14- and 15-year-old students to the site to work for a day. They got very excited when they heard about the history buried there. I assigned them the job of being the first to clear brush from a CCC barracks - Hamlin Barracks #1 - the one



closest to the Mess Hall. They got super excited when one of the boys picked up the two halves of a very weathered mess kit that must have been tossed under the barracks a long time ago. They made a rather large pile of brush in a short period of time and didn't want to stop when the bus came to take them back to Spencerport.

A "woodchipper for hire" made a one-day visit to the site a few days after the BOCES kids left. A local farmer, a member of the Hamlin Planning Board, donated $250 dollars to hire the woodchipper. The Park provided a crew to operate the chipper and to toss the brush into it as our volunteers dragged it over to the machine. Quite a pile of brush had accumulated because we were now working a little north of the Mess Hall. It was a long way from there to the front of the camp and we couldn't dump brush on our east neighbor's property.

Our team of volunteers included Walt, Nick, my wife Sue, and my son Jesse. We made a heck of a pile of wood chips and got our $250 worth out of that machine's visit to the site! Jesse put some of us to shame by the way he shoved his two arms into a pile of brush past his elbows and lifted, in one pull, the equivalent of two trips to the chipper.

Jerry Hoffman (a member of the Hamlin Conservation Board) and another local guy (I wish I could remember his name) brought their walk-behind brush hogs to the site a couple of times each (never together) to knock down some of the overgrowth that had taken over the clearing the Park made for Mary Smith's 1985 reunion. They worked alone with no fanfare, and I felt bad that I was the only one standing on the sidelines clapping as they worked. Their efforts were a kind of hold-over until we could get to that area with our loppers and pruning saws.

# A Very Special Visitor To The Site

83-year-old Margie Boire (pronounced Boyer) was a very special visitor to the site. She called Marty to tell him that she was 21 years old when she was hired to drive a car full of guards (and their guns and extra ammo) behind the trucks and buses taking POWs from our camp to work in canning factories in the area. She said she would like to visit the site, and Marty made arrangements.

Margie drove herself from Albion to the little parking lot at the CCC site and Marty helped her onto a comfortable cushion in the Park's John Deere Gator. We chatted a while and I showed her some laminated enlargements I had of the two aerial photos of the old camp. Then Marty drove her back and forth on Moscow Road so she could get her bearings before pulling into the eastern entrance to the camp. He stopped about 150 feet in and parked with the Mess Hall site dead ahead.



I showed Margie where we were in the old photos and before Margie could get lost in thought while sorting through old memories, I sprang my first question on her. "Margie, where was the guard tower?" Without thinking Margie quickly pointed, "Right over there."



*Our guard towers would now look like this one after 70 years if they had not been pulled down in 1946. This tower is at one of the corners of the Odenbach boat factory at the end of Dewey Avenue, Rochester. State refused to receive as a gift from the Odenbachs.*

She even surprised herself. And after that all kinds of precious information came forth. She described the main gate and recited part of a jingle she and the other guard car drivers used to sing under their breath. "All left turns and once around the flagpole…" as she pointed to where that flagpole stood.

Then Marty drove the Gator to where Margie, in the summer of 1945, pulled up every workday morning and waited while the POWs passed by her car (and whistled at her) on their way to their bus or truck. [That location was parallel to the Officer's Quarters, facing south.] As she sat there in the Gator, I asked her a few more questions. She said there was another guard tower near the other entrance to the camp where the trucks and buses drove in to pick up the POWs, but she didn't know much about the interior of the POW camp.

Marty drove her back to her car and after she left, I got a shovel and went back to where Margie said the main gate to the POW camp had been. So far, we had uncovered absolutely nothing at the site that belonged exclusively to the POW camp. That changed right away. The three cement anchors for the posts of the main gate were right where Margie said they would be! I checked their size and spacing with my copy of the official blueprint for a POW gate and barbed wire fence line and they conformed to the inch.

A few weeks later, Marty and I invited Margie to lunch at the Village Inn, a restaurant north of Albion, as a “thank you” for her contribution to our project. During the lunch she answered some more of my questions and gave each of us a copy of a DVD made of a talk she gave at the Albion Library. Anything we might have forgotten to ask her was taken care of in that video.

Margie had worked at a local USO Club when her father got her the job driving a guard car. But when the Commandant of the POW camp found out he had just hired a female, he took back his offer. As he put it, there was no way guards of his were going to ride in a closed vehicle with a female!

So, Margie’s dad bought her a new 1941, white, Chevy convertible and he and Margie drove to the camp. Confronting the Commandant her dad said, “Now can she drive the guards?” The question came too quick for him to come up with a good excuse and Margie got the job!

# Tying Up A Few Loose Ends

Since Marty gave us free rein of the CCC camp ground, recognizable historic sites could be found in all areas at the southern end of the property - EXCEPT the area between the flagpole and the parking lot. We had found two long sections of mini train track (like the track for the kiddie trains in amusement parks) stashed in a clump of tall bushes at the south end of the little parking lot. Marty had carted them off for safe keeping and cleared away the bushes. And I had already talked to the guy who drove the engine of the CCC mini train and had written down his story. But that was the extent of our attention to that area. All visitors who arrived at our parking lot had to walk a round-about route to the Mess Hall and that bothered Sue.



Sue wanted to be able to get out of her car and walk straight past the flagpole to the Mess Hall site. Dan, Sue and I started to clear a six-foot-wide path. [As I said before, Dan always dropped whatever he was doing to help others.] As it turns out It was not as easy as it looked. Terrible tangles of honeysuckle were everywhere! I think it took two days and the path we ended up with was neither smooth nor straight. Nick would help us make the new path look presentable and afterwards, Nick took on the job of tidying up all of the area to the west of the Mess Hall.



After the problem I had trying to stick my white post into the ground where the flagpole base was hidden, I asked Dan to make me a probe. He welded a nine-inch-long, one-quarter-inch tempered steel rod onto the end of a 26-inch-long half-inch ordinary iron rod. Dan gave the hardened steel a sharp point and I drove the half-inch rod end into a "D" shaped handle sawed off a broken shovel to become a probe I

Melvin LaDue ran the mini train. It had been set up to bring sand from the dredging of the Brockport Yacht Club - three miles away - to the beach area the CCC was working on in the Park. The train was also used to haul gravel made at the CCC rock crusher.

I have only seen one photo of the mini train but there must be more somewhere. There was a lot of track, and the rumor is that it was trashed somewhere to the NW of the CCC camp long after the camp closed. There is another rumor that says the engine is buried somewhere behind the Park's maintenance buildings.

One of the first artifacts Jesse, Marty and I found was one of the very heavy iron, rectangular rings that went on top of the train cars to keep rocks from chipping away the upper edges of the cars. Marty carted off that iron rectangle for safe keeping. Marty also found out that parts of the train and some tracks were used in the CCC sawmill and when our CCC camp closed in 1941, the modified train cars and some tracks were taken to the Letchworth sawmill. Marty and I visited the Letchworth sawmill to see it in action.



could easily poke around in suspicious ground anywhere I wanted.

Sue and I would give the new tool a workout. Everything south of the line of Barracks had been pretty much cleared. (Dan was still working in the dent in the ground where the Mess Hall once stood). And it was time to check out the area that used to be a walkway in front of the Barracks. The Spencerport kids had opened up a lot of Barracks #1 (the one at the east end) and we started there, randomly sticking my new probe into the ground, here and there, as we walked.

Right away the probe located something buried near where the front door of Barracks #1 should be. When we scraped the dirt cover away a short line of flat stones appeared instead of a cement slab. Hmmmm.

We moved down to about where the front of Barracks #2 should be and BINGO. The probe told us there was hard stuff all over the place! When Sue got done carefully scraping the dirt away, we had a kind of patio staring at us! No cement slab - just a flagstone patio!



*Sue discovered the patio stones in front of Barracks #2 with the probe seen to the left of the two yellow flags.*



*More poking around and more patio stones show up. Ed gives Sue a hand with the clearing. [There are not many photos of me working because I always held the camera.]*

We quickly moved down to Barracks sites #3, #4, and #5. Barracks #3 had a bunch of random, fairly good-sized rocks scattered around where the front door stoop should have been but that was all. The probe picked nothing up at the front of Barracks #4 and #5. Hmmmm.




It wasn't long before I checked another one of Mary's photos of CCC alumni photos and noticed a photo of Mate Jenk squatting in front of Barracks #2. Behind him, to his left, was a small flagstone patio! Another mystery solved.

Barracks #1 probably had a small patio at one time, but something happened to most of it. Barracks #3's patio obviously met a violent end - broken stone everywhere. Something must have made Barracks #4 and #5's patios disappear completely. But what happened to the cement slabs on the floor inside the sheltered entryways of the Barracks? Hmmmm, again.

The Friends of Hamlin Beach State Park organization Marty wanted was up and running around this time. Eventually they heard about Dan's talents and asked Dan to build a kiosk to be put along a sidewalk at Area #3 of the park. The Friends paid for the materials and Dan donated the labor and the placement. When Nick and I saw it, we asked Dan to build one for the CCC site in his "spare time." Of course, Dan went right to work knowing full well he would also have to supply the materials for this kiosk. It's still standing proudly next to the CCC Recreation Building.



*Marty Howden gets an update on the History Trail from the kiosk that Dan built.*

# Barracks #2

The clearing of Barracks #1 continued as various volunteers had time but north of that very unique "patio" at the south end of Barracks #2 was a gigantic pile of dirt that wasn't supposed to be there. Where did it come from?

Behind that gigantic pile of dirt was the 15-foot-long deep trench Marty and I found when we took a shortcut to our cars from the pop bottle he had placed on the three cement slabs. But the trench was nowhere near deep enough to be able to gobble up all that dirt!

Some days after Sue discovered the little patio Hamlin Highway Superintendent, David Rose, answered my request to visit the site to answer some technical questions. When he saw the pile of dirt, he immediately determined that it was carried there. It wasn't bulldozed. Interesting!

Marty found an old blueprint somewhere and brought it to the site. The heading on it said it was for turning the CCC camp into a large tree nursery in 1956. Marty said that the nursery project was abandoned about six weeks after it started. A light was beginning to come on and I wish now I had made a copy of the drawing and studied it in detail, but I didn't. My mind got to churning in too big a hurry!

There was a soggy depression in the ground where the south wing of the Education Building used to be. The aerial photos for the CCC site showed no such depression there. A little arithmetic, a little sketch, and a little imagination floated the idea that during the process of turning the site into a tree nursery, dirt was dug from the Education Building area, for some unknown reason, and dumped on the Barracks #2 site.

I wanted that dirt out of there but that couldn't be done with loppers and pruning saws! I told Walt about the problem, and he said he could do it. He brought his John Deere to the site again and work began.

I had asked David Rose to join me at the CCC site to answer some questions about the square manhole the SUNY kid found and about the waterline shut-off we uncovered next to the Infirmary. His excellent memory of Hamlin history in the 1940s would be a big help, too.

He told me that the uneven ground near the east end of the first trail we cleared back in June and July of 2008 looked like the disconnect of a water line he remembered being run from the CCC camp to the Grimm farm next door. When the camp opened, it had the same lousy water quality the Grimm farm had always had and when a waterline was run from the Brockport Pumping Station to the CCC camp, the camp shared it with the Grimm's as part of a good neighbor policy. When the CCC camp closed, the unmetered waterline had to be disconnected.

It appeared to him that the water line went from what is now the Lake Ontario State Parkway, to the latrine, on to the Infirmary, and from there to three other buildings in the camp. He also told me to keep an eye open for another manhole somewhere past the middle of the camp that was required for clean-out. He studied the pile of dirt at the Barracks site and the trench behind it. Broken tiles pieced here and there seemed to indicate that the CCC sewer line had been purposely put out of commission there.

Walt filled in the trench first with the bucket on his little tractor. He examined every scoop of dirt he dumped, looking for any artifacts that might have been buried there. Then he started moving dirt to the depression near the Education

Building over 300 feet away. He was very careful not to tear up the ground along the way.

I was particularly impressed with Walt's attention to all details. When a crushed pop can appeared, or a wad of paper, he'd get off his tractor and retrieve it for me to examine. The pop cans turned out to be from a grocery store chain in the 50s. Bags left over from a worker's lunch break contained food wrappers and milk cartons that could be traced to the 50s. Walt even spotted a tiny India Ink bottle - with ink still in it - and saved it. It could only have come from the Education Building along with a piece of slate chalkboard he watched appear. (A similar piece of chalkboard was later found at the Education Building site.) Thanks to Walt's sharp eyes and attention to detail, there was no doubt in my mind that the pile of dirt had been dumped there in 1956 and it had come from the Education Building site.

It would take Walt many visits to the site to complete the job. When he finished, the area where Barracks #2 once stood looked just like the sites where the other four barracks once stood.

# Meanwhile

Since June 8, great things have happened all over the old CCC camp site. With the changing of the seasons coming on, little storms created more messes in the areas we had uncovered that had to be cleaned up again. That took volunteers away from other areas they had been working on. Dan made another hardened steel probe, and I sawed off another "D" shaped shovel handle for it. Sue and I put it to work looking for the north ends of the five barracks sites.

The line of flags I had been able to place from the front of the camp, through the flagpole all the way to where the center of the latrine door should be gave us something to measure from. The tape measure confirmed that three cement slabs found by Marty and marked with a TAB bottle [my memory finally kicked in with Jesse's help] were indeed an elaborate north door stoop for Barracks #2. Marty's Planting Plan told us where, from there, we should go to locate the other four north door stoops.

The probe found some broken flat stones where Barracks #1 ought to be. Barracks #3 did have a cement slab, but it was pushed quite a bit off-center. There was some evidence that some heavy equipment had worked over the area to account for it. Probably some more of the conversion to a tree nursery project.

Barracks #4's north door was marked with broken up cement pieces and the probe only found some rocks where a cement stoop of Barracks #5 should be - and both findings lined up with the appropriate dents in the ground. For the time being, we marked all of those north doors with those three-foot-long Tractor Supply plastic posts you push into the ground with your foot.

Further poking around back there in December of 2008 led to the discovery of some "curbing" type cement in the latrine location at the end of my flagged line. That got Dan's attention. He had been preparing a couple of barracks sites in preparation for another visit of the Clearing Crew. He dropped everything to begin clearing the area between the north end of Barracks #3 and the latrine. Sue and I began lopping and kicking aside dirt and sod to expose the cement curbing.

The curbing ended up being a course of cement blocks outlining the entire latrine 20'x40' cement washroom floor. Bumps against the "curb" at the north side of the washroom turned out to be the beginning of the toilet pit over which once sat two rows of toilet seats. But there was no evidence of a building over the toilet area.

We kept poking around back there. Up until that time, everyone was most interested in the part of the camp you could see from Moscow Road. The volunteer workers in particular now started poking more and more around the latrine. One of the main features of that area was the 50-foot-wide road across the camp and the southern edge of that road came within a couple of feet of the latrine toilet pit.

The 50-foot-wide road was built in 1935 to hold up under the constant use of the big CCC trucks and the U.S. Army trucks that were involved in the building of Hamlin Beach State Park. The Army had a five-bay garage off the northern edge of that road to the east and the CCC had a 13-bay garage off the northern edge of that road directly behind the latrine. The road was made of packed gravel so thick most trees common to the area could not take root in it - even after 70 years. The accumulation of organic matter, dust

and dirt over 70 years had built a layer of soil over the gravel which had allowed some brush and tall grass to take root. But black willow trees can work their roots down through almost anything and some huge black willows did manage to take over some of the eastern most end of the 50-foot road's southern edge.

As it turns out, this 50-foot-wide road was the open grassy lane I had been able to catch sight of back in 1997 when the Hamlin Conservation Board was investigating the unmarked oil drums found on the CCC site. But now - the tail end of 2008 - I had the chance to examine it more closely. I wanted to mark it with wire flags all the way across the camp.

I made a good guess where the southern edge of the road was a little to the west of the latrine. I couldn't really see the north side of the road through the thick brush and prickers, and I couldn't skooch down and walk as good as I used to, so I asked Sue to drag the end of my 100-foot tape through the overgrowth until I told her to stop. At that point - 50 feet from where I was standing - she was supposed to poke the end of a wire flag into the ground.

She hollered back that she couldn't get the wire to go into the ground. I told her to keep poking in the general area. I just needed a general idea of where the edge of the road was. She said she couldn't set the flag because there was a cement floor there. I hollered back, "Impossible. The 13-bay garage sat there, and it had a gravel floor." Sue kept insisting that there was a cement floor there and crawled back out.

Dan and I immediately started cutting our way through the brush to the other side of the 50-foot road. Sure enough, a large area of cement floor eventually appeared. It even had a very old, dented 30-gallon garbage can sitting on it! Hmmmm.

# Winter Comes To The Site

Between snows and thaws things progressed nevertheless all around the camp as winter began. When snow and rain kept us from using our loppers, we took to correcting previous measurements as new information came in. Dan and I also kept busy marking what we now called streets and roads within the site. We henceforth declared the word “streets” to be for the paths that ran east to west and “roads” to be the word for the paths that ran from north to south.

Over the winter, Dan got the Mess Hall site looking really nice and had discovered some more plumbing there. Sue and I moved the picnic table - the one Nick ate a hot dog at on his first day there - to the Mess Hall site so Dan would have a place to rest. Sue and I put stakes at all 12 corners of the Mess Hall so visitors would get an idea of the size and shape of the building. We did lots of little stuff. [Read the first diary covering the unburying of the site, starting on page 78.]

Early in March, the Clearing Crew cleared some of the Education Building site. A few days later Sue and I found the flagstone walkway the CCC put in place outside the south door of the Recreation Building.

On March 28, 2009, Nick began scraping down the cement CCC washroom floor with a flat nosed shovel, an ice scrapper, pruning saw, loppers, and hatchet for the stumps. Little grass snakes about two feet long kept getting in his way. They lived in the plumbing beneath the cement floor. Nick wouldn’t hurt them but kept tossing them out of his way - and they kept coming back.



It was brutal work, but Nick kept at it. Six to eight inches of gravel, dirt and sod covered an area of about 800 square feet and roots of all kinds held it in place. By the time he finished, Sue and I had exposed the top edges of the three-foot wide, 20-foot-long toilet pit. That only increased Nick’s curiosity and impatience. Nick couldn’t wait to start shoveling out the toilet pit! For him, the next two weeks in April suddenly became booked up.



*Bill (left) and Nick are uncovering the stone walkway in front of the south door of the recreation building.*



*CCC graduate Don Mannara would proudly walk down the flagstone walkway again for the first time in 70 years.*

# The Story Suddenly Gets More Interesting

The toilet pit was full to the brim. Stones, large and small, and other debris made up the top one-third of the contents. Under that began a mix of miscellaneous hardware scraps, broken dishes, and a large assortment of big and little bottles, all surrounded by a very fine black powdery substance. Nick removed the big stuff and started piles of the various items - whole bottles in one pile, broken bottles in another pile, remains of coffee mugs and dishes in another. He was less careful of the metal objects. In the beginning he even sifted the black powder but soon determined it was a waste of time.



*Nick sifts all soil removed from the latrine to salvage artifacts*

It took Nick many days of digging, much of it on his hands and knees. His clothes were black at the end of each day and his wife told me his skin was just as black as his clothes when he stepped out of them. The powder was so fine it could even go through a pair of jeans! But he loved the job.

While Nick hunted for treasure in the CCC toilet pit, Sue and I searched for signs of a foundation for a building over the toilet area. All we came up with were some more miscellaneous hardware - e.g. door and window hinges, bolts and screws, electrical boxes - and a lot of that showed signs of having been in a fire.

About then, Nick uncovered a beer bottle deep within the toilet pit, and when I saw that it had a screw top, I was suddenly shocked! The CCC did not allow alcohol in the camp. And to me the screw top meant "modern beer bottle!" Had someone else been messing around in this site before we got here?! How could that be?!

I was only upset until I got home to my computer. Google told me that screw top beer bottles were invented by Miller Beer in the early 1930s. Besides, the color of our bottle was a little off and so was the shape. It also said something about "no deposit" and 'no return" on the bottom of the bottle. Whew!

**But another bit of reality suddenly set in. All of a sudden, I knew our entire mind set had been all wrong since June 8. We assumed that we had been uncovering the CCC camp all this time! The POW camp seldom entered our minds. Suddenly I realized that the camp was as the LAST inhabitants left it - not the first habitants! The Department of Interior Building we uncovered was not housing dignitaries from Washington. It was housing POW camp guards! The Mess Hall wasn't feeding CCC guys. It was feeding German POWs! Those barracks didn't sleep 40 CCC guys each. They each slept 80 German POWs.**

The beer bottle was there in the latrine where Nick found it because of the POW camp policy. POWs could purchase two bottles of beer a day (at five cents per bottle) if they had the money. (When they worked, they earned 80 cents per day.)

I learned later more about the fire that burned down the latrine shortly after the first POWs arrived. That accounted for the burned hardware we found. The latrine was rebuilt a.s.a.p. but a much larger washroom and shower were also built nearby - probably because the sudden doubled occupancy had put undue stress on the original shower room's coal-fired hot water heater and probably contributed to causing the fire. But I didn't know exactly where the extra shower room was built until I remembered sending Sue on that mission. The cement she found before winter set in could very well have been the floor of the new POW shower room!

I didn't know the rest of the story then, but much later I would learn that 12 POWs volunteered to stay back after the camp closed the first week of January. I ended up talking to one of those 12 guys - via email - and Mary Smith had interviewed another one of those 12 guys. Their job was to empty out the buildings, fold up the bunks, throw all trash found here and there (some from up in the rafters) into the latrine. The bottles were mostly shampoo, shoe polish, after shave, and cough syrup bottles. The POWs hoarded the empty bottles and filled them with homemade booze to take to work with them. They hid the bottles wherever they could and many of the bottles ended up in the toilet pit!



*POWs last used these artifacts found buried in the latrine*

# A Short Hamlin CCC History Break

Months after Nick finished digging out the toilet pit he and his shovel would return to the rest of the latrine. A 4'x5' rectangular cement top to what looked like another manhole had been uncovered outside the SE corner of the latrine and Nick was dying to find out how deep it was. Could it be the clean-out we had been told to look out for?

Digging it out was worse than scraping clean the latrine floor had been but Nick kept at it. It had been filled with rocks of all sizes and chunks of concrete. And this manhole was full of plumbing. It took several days and when he was done it ended up being over five feet deep with a cement floor. [We nicknamed it the "snake pit."]

As it turns out, back in 1935 the CCC camp designers planned to provide water for the camp via a well. That well was a failure. The water reeked and there was not much of it. The remains of the abandoned well were a few feet away to the east of the manhole.

In desperation, a waterline (about three inches in diameter) was run from what is now the Lake Ontario State Parkway. (They tapped into the line that ran from the Brockport Pumping Station to what would become the State Park.) The new CCC waterline entered the camp from the north and ran to the center of the 13-bay garage. After passing under the garage it went to the well's defunct system of valves through a hole cut into the side of the latrine manhole. In the latrine manhole, all they had to do was unhook the pipe from the well and plumb in the new waterline in its place. There already was a pipe from there to the Infirmary and beyond.

Nick carefully uncovered the Christmas-tree-like stack of pipe elbows and valves. Nothing was broken, the valves still worked and, I kid you not, water was still dripping from one of the joints!

Of course, this got Dan hanging around the latrine again, too. It had bothered him that the destruction of the camp's water and sewer system was ordered after the camp closed. In the process, heavy equipment deliberately broke off the end of the toilet pit and some of the sides.

The bulldozer operator must have been enjoying the job because many of the cement floors at that end of the camp ended up being broken up, too.

Dan went to work collecting all the broken-off pieces of the toilet pit and neatly stacking them so that they could be put back in place someday. He convinced himself that a huge chunk broken off could and should be put back in place to make the toilet trench look more like a toilet trench. That piece weighed about 600 pounds!

Dan designed and built a kind of gallows over the end of the pit and with chains and jacks suspended the chunk of cement from it. He twisted and braced everything so that the chunk of cement could be lowered into position when he was ready.



Then he designed and built two pairs of long, stainless steel braces to hold the chunk in place

after it was lowered into position. The braces required drilling many holes through the six-inch thick toilet pit wall and holes in the hanging chunk of cement. Stainless steel nuts and bolts fitted with specially tooled levelers of his own design, went through the holes (that were right where they were supposed to be) when the chunk of cement was lowered into position. The repair is today (2024) just as he left it!



When I asked Dan how much that job would have cost the Park if they had bid it out and he said $5,000. Now back to the 50-foot-wide road and the mission I sent Sue on.

Author's note: These two volunteers - Nick and Dan - obviously deserve medals, and as you will see, they were just getting warmed up! I have many photos showing these two guys at work and everything else you have been learning - including the oil drums.

# More Of The POW Camp Connection Makes Itself Known

On April 24, Dan and I started clearing the east half of the 50-foot-wide road. On May 6, 2009, the Clearing Crew finished it. Over the next couple of days, we all did a lot more clearing north of the latrine. Eventually we were able to outline the entire 13-bay garage with wire flags.

Spring fever had set in, and activity developed all over the site. The open septic system that waste from the latrine flowed to (reduced to liquid with chemicals) was discovered behind the 13-bay garage and a frantic search for the chlorination building shown on the Planting Plan started.

The Boy Scouts from Morton worked at several different locations of the site and on May 27, the littlest scout of the two jumped into the manhole at the south end of the camp and determined where each the four pipes at the bottom of the manhole pointed. Three pipes pointed to buildings at the front of the camp and one pipe pointed to the open septic tank that had just been discovered hundreds of feet away at the north end of the camp.

That brought us very close to the first anniversary of the beginning of the project and Marty wanted to know how many "People Hours" of work had been done at the site so far. I had tried to keep some kind of running total as we worked, and came up with a figure of 1,150 people hours worked since June 8, 2008. Starting on November 25, I had also given six talks to local groups about our work at the site.

And we kept on making progress in spite of the fact that we now had to compete with Mother Nature. With all the clearing that had been done, all kinds of plant life took advantage of all the sunlight that now fell on the area and began to take the camp back again. Some of the volunteers continued to unbury the old camp while others worked to keep it from becoming buried again.



On June 5, we reached some more conclusions about the cement on the north side of the 50-foot road behind the latrine. As it turned out, we determined that all of the 13-bay garage had gravel floors except two bays near the center. Some work on trucks required a cement floor and that luxury was given to those two bays. There was a shared catch basin for water



between those two bays and it was still intact (but two very tall trees were growing in it). To the west of those two bays another cement floor (the one Sue found) had been added after the CCC camp closed, about six inches higher, and it covered what used to be the gravel floors of several bays of the garage to the west.

The cement of the raised floor was of poorer quality than the cement in the middle two bays, but it was quite thick. Pipe was buried under the new cement - plumbing to urinals, sinks, and two shower rooms. There also appears to have been at least one standard toilet installed there.

A POW who moved back to the Hamlin area five or six years after the war was interviewed by Mary Smith and he reported that sinks for doing laundry, complete with wringers, were also installed in the new washroom after the latrine burned down. I think they occupied the cement in the middle two bays of the CCC garage. Someone else reported that local people donated various items to the POW camp. One of those items was a washing machine and I found the wringer from it next to the recently discovered cement floors.

But it was impossible to determine what the new POW washroom looked like. It had to have had some windows and more than one door. Where was the main entrance? What did the roof line look like? It must have had a chimney or two.

The new cement floor that abutted the old cement in the middle bays of the garage had been busted up terribly by some kind of heavy equipment and Dan spent days putting the pieces back together. (Dan straightened some of the pipes and put them in their original places before he began.) It was like a huge jigsaw puzzle and there were a few pieces missing. Those he filled in with pieces he manufactured. It took him many days. But he never got around to putting together the pieces of the west end of the new washroom floor. Those puzzle pieces are still stacked there ready to be fitted together. Consequently, we don't yet know exactly how long the new washroom was. And we won't know until someone finds a photo of the POW camp!



# A 2023 Sherlock Holmes Type Look At The POW Washroom Mystery

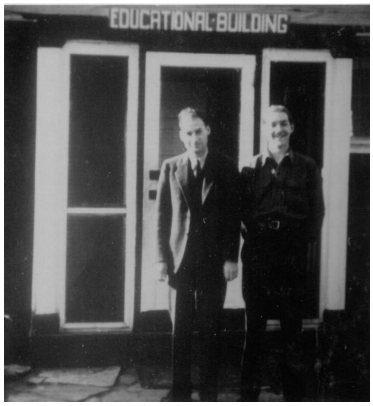
In the summer of 2023, there was still no new information about the washroom that was hurriedly built at the POW camp after the CCC latrine burned to the ground. The only two POWs I had talked to didn't remember what it looked like. There were no photos of it that I know of, and no one in town I talked to remembers it. It appears as though we who uncovered the floor of the washroom know more of the story about it than anyone else on the planet!

One evening I was sitting on a picnic table on that washroom floor before heading back to my car, taking a short break from a walk around the camp. I had sat at that table dozens of times since 2010, but this time I took special notice of two trees between the latrine and where I was sitting. Maybe it was because the two trees - a large wild cherry and a tall ash tree - had died and their bark was in the process of peeling away.

As I studied them, I noticed that they were both the same distance from the edge of the cement floor I was sitting on - about 15 feet. I also noticed that they were about 12 feet apart and the distance between them appeared to be exactly centered in front of the cement floor in the two bays of the old 13-bay garage. Centered and the same distance from the edge of the cement? Hmmmm.

Then I took another look up and down the 50-foot road that passed between me and the latrine. Other than the "grow anywhere" black willows at the east end of the road, there were no other mature trees growing on that road. The thick gravel had made it impossible for most trees to take root there. How did these two trees manage? Dan, Nick, and I had tried several times to drive posts into the road with no success. Nick did manage to make a hole once, but he had to use a pick and pry bar - and it took him a while!

Then it hit me! Suppose the new washroom needed a kind of porch or landing of some kind at the entryway. Heavy equipment could have made holes in the gravel road for two wooden posts 15 feet from the door of the new washroom, and 12 feet apart! When the washroom was dismantled with the rest of the camp in 1946, the posts would have been pulled out or cut off and left to rot. An invitation for the cherry tree and an ash tree to take root there!




There are photos of similar porches added to some of the main entrances of certain CCC buildings (two at the Education Building). A porch-type landing here would be quite appropriate. Accordingly, the roof line would probably have been from east to west. As I sat there, I was beginning to form a mental image of the POW washroom in my head! I hope I live long enough to see the first photo of our POW camp appear!



# Snap Back To 2009

After the beer bottle awakening and the discovery of the cement where there shouldn't be cement, all of the volunteers kept a watchful eye open for anything that could be associated with a POW camp. We were always on the lookout for barbed wire or anything that might suggest a location that a guard tower might have occupied.

That was on our minds when our attention spread to the west where the cement floor of the tool complex shown in the aerial photos appeared right where it was shown to be. The SE corner of that floor was covered with large pieces of Medina Sandstone, the size and shape of those used in the CCC built buildings in the State Park. The pile was several feet high and the roots and stems of all kinds of vegetation anchored the flat chunks in place. Huge sections of tree trunks put there by the Park covered most of the SW corner. One of them reminded me of a sleeping hippopotamus in size and shape.

Marty arranged for the Park to move the huge tree trunks out of the way and Dan rolled the rest of them away with his peavey. (A photo of Dan and his peavey is posted on the story board at the site.) The Vogt brothers removed the vegetation from the pile of sandstone for another Boy Scout merit badge.





Of course, Nick shoveled the dirt and sod from the Tool house cement floor. Like the POW washroom floor, much of the Tool House floor

Later on, Dan, Nick and Walt removed the sandstone from the cement floor during one snowy, cold winter, along with a much larger pile of Medina Sandstone west of the latrine. The Park wouldn't let us sell the sandstone to finance our no-budget labors but Jay Bailey, Marty's replacement after he retired, allowed Dan, Nick and Walt to put all of it in a 75-foot-long wall, three feet high and four feet wide, along the roadway at the western edge of the camp.

The sandstone had been dumped at the CCC site, in two piles, after violent storms in the early 1970s tore up much of Hamlin Beach State Park. A CCC built sea wall from the pier to the bathhouse had collapsed and the State scooped it up and took it to the camp.

The total weight of sandstone in the wall is estimated at 43 tons. Some of the pieces weighed over 200 pounds. Dan had to chop many of the chunks free of the ice that froze them to the ground. He used a two wheeled handcart to carry them to the wall where Nick arranged them. Walt provided some relief from the back breaking work with the bucket on his John Deere tractor. The wall is still there in 2024, and the Park has used pieces of it for repairs to stonework in the Park.



Nick uncovered was broken up and had to be put together like another jigsaw puzzle. Dan took care of that.

I wrestled with the measurements. The general shape of the tool building complex matched the aerial photos, but the measurements shown on the Planting Plan and the inventories of the CCC buildings didn't match the measurements I got with a tape measure applied to the actual floor. The building has obviously undergone some alterations from time to time.

The wing of the Tool House called the Tool Repair Shop still had the oil stains on the floor from the lathes that turned tool handles from native ash. But signs of the Blacksmith Shop that stood less than 50 feet due north of the Repair Shop were not to be found. Everything that once sat in that area had been removed some time ago by State Park activity of all kinds. Their huge brush dump sat nearby, and the rocks left by the rock crusher became the base for more dumping. There wasn't even a clue to the site a bit to the north of the large utility building used by the rock cutters back in the 1930s. The chance that some evidence of the POW camp might still be hidden there had to be zero to none!

# Back At The Other End Of The Camp

As the volunteers fought to keep up with nature's efforts to take back the camp, I asked Dan to build something that would help us carry brush away from the camp to our brush dump. I suggested bicycle wheels and a long handle.

Dan invented and built (at his own expense) what we now call the "brush buggy." It had a bed that measured a little over four feet by four feet between two skinny tired bicycle wheels that made it sit over a foot off the ground. A five-foot-long handle kept the user out of the way of the pile of brush on it and made it easy to pull. It was high enough to go over stumps and rocks. It also had four short stakes sticking up from the corners of the bed to hold brush in place and it could be stacked very high. The rule was, "If you fill it, you empty it."



Sue was one of the first to use it. She was annoyed by the fact that barracks sites #4 and #5 seemed to have been ignored and she proceeded to clear them herself! She did a fine job and I have a photo of her pulling one of many full loads on the brush buggy to our brush dump.



Another bit of business that needed to be taken care of was the huge 100-foot-long, 50-foot-wide, 14-foot-high pile of junked picnic tables north of Barracks #4 and #5 (between the latrine and the west road into the camp). The picnic table graveyard was an eyesore and Dan tackled it like he did his other projects at the site. Over the course of a few weeks, Dan took every one of those busted up tables apart to salvage what he could from them. Marty assigned Brett, his new second in command, to get a couple of huge trees that had fallen across the pile cut up and hauled out of Dan's way.



Dan filled two 30-gallon garbage cans with hardware after inventing a special tool for the removal of some of the corroded hardware. He put picnic tabletops that still had some life in them in one pile and stacked the others to be

Sue even found another proof of the barracks being occupied by POWs. While clearing the Barracks #4 site she saw the lip of an aluminum cup sticking out of the dirt. She carefully dug it free and wiped it off. It took me a while to research it, but it turned out to be one of the cups that hung from hooks over the cooking vats at the Duffy Mott canning factory. Many Hamlin POWs worked there. During the canning process someone with a clipboard would visit the vats and take samples with the aluminum cups. Obviously, one of the POWs who lived in Barracks #4 wanted to have his own personal metal cup back at the camp, so he put this one in his shirt and took it home! (The location of the spout on the lip of the cup suggests that the POW who "borrowed it" was left-handed!) When the POW was transferred to another camp, he probably tossed it under the barracks so as not to be caught with contraband.

discarded. Seat boards were also sorted. The fat cedar legs of the tables were stacked to be sold by the park as firewood - $10 per load. A count of the tops showed that over 330 tables had been piled there.



Dan was able to assemble three very sturdy picnic tables from parts and he placed them at the pond that had been discovered just before the surveyors got to the camp. He figured the fishermen who were now using “Howden Pond” might enjoy them. I had three plaques made in Spencerport that noted that Dan Wilson had provided those tables. (The tables are still there, 2024.)

Several of the picnic tabletops became bridges here and there in the camp. One was used to cover the manhole (the snake pit) next to the latrine so that deer wouldn’t accidentally fall in it. Another was used to cover the manhole the SUNY kid found. The rest of the tables were stored in a clearing north of the long garage next to the farmhouse. The salvageable seat boards found uses all over the camp, too. The buckets of hardware ended up at some salvage yard in Rochester.



*Cleared site in the fall where picnic tale pile used to be. CCC bridge Nov 2016 that runs north south between barracks #4 and #5*

# The 2010 CCC Motor Pool



To take the pressure off the brush buggy, I began a collection of wagons and trailers to be pulled behind a lawn mower I donated to the cause. I bought another lawn mower I saw on the way to the site. I gave the lady $50 for it. The steering was barely functioning, and the mower deck had been removed with some of its hardware left dangling under the engine (which started okay but the dipstick indicated that the crankcase was nearly empty). Jesse drove it to the CCC site for me.

We had the beginnings of a motor pool and Marty and Jay saw to it that we had a place to house it - the long and short garages beside the farmhouse. After Marty retired, his successor, Jay Bailey, had a cabinet sent over to keep our gasoline cans in - State of NY approved. From then on, the Park also supplied our gasoline. He also provided fire extinguishers and had some electric outlets installed.



*There is a trailer under the pile of brush that Jesse picked up!*

The upstairs area of the long garage was cleared out and it became a place to store all the artifacts that kept turning up. I bought a new lawn tractor/mower for my home and brought my old one to the new motor pool. Over one winter, Dan hung the deck-less mower I bought by the side of the road from the ceiling like a punching bag and re-designed its entire underside. It turned out to be a powerful and very useful machine.

The hay wagon idea came after a local farmer brought a hay wagon to the site to haul away some of the cedar scraps Dan had piled neatly 400 feet down the west CCC entrance off Moscow Road. The farmer loaned us the hay wagon until he needed it again and we used it to haul the piles of brush volunteer groups had made to our brush dump.

But it wasn't long before the farmer asked to borrow it back, so I bought a broken-down hay wagon from a lady who lived in the next town over for $150. I officially signed it over to the Friends of the Park organization at one of their meetings and Waye Motors in Hamlin donated new tires for it. Someone else donated lumber for a new deck. We were in business again!

After the hay wagon was retired, an attempt was made to turn it into a wagon to haul people around the site. That fell through and I asked the Park to donate it to a Boy Scout or a Girl Scout troop for their hayrides. The Park said "No" because the Park might be able to use it. The hay wagon still sits behind the long garage, in the open, slowly warping and deteriorating.

Dan modified our two store-bought trailers to hold brush and fixed them so they could be drawn in tandem behind our home-made wagon. We had been relying on a hay wagon to

haul brush, but we had to schedule Walt to come and tow the hay wagon to the brush dump when it was full. Besides that, the hay wagon was easy to load - and overload - but unloading it was miserable! When we accidentally discovered that the little tractor I bought by the side of the road could pull the full hay wagon anywhere we wanted to, and that our other little tractors and trailers could also out-perform the hay wagon (Dan had designed the trailers so that they could be unloaded in seconds) the hay wagon was retired.

Nick had been hauling his walk-behind lawn mower to the site to keep ahead of Mother Nature and eventually decided to leave it at the site and buy another one for home. The long garage was getting crowded, so he kept it in the little garage. Soon, a member of the Friends bought a Swisher from the Tractor Supply Store (a 3.5 horsepower walk behind line trimmer) to help keep up with Mother Nature and he, too, stored it in the little garage. His Swisher worked so well, Dan and I each bought one and we parked ours in the little garage, too!

# The Sawmill Site Is Discovered (and verified)

Dan, Nick, Sue and I went to the north end of the camp one day to plan our tidying up of the two cement floors that had been uncovered. But first we checked out the pond and some clearing Dan had just done along its shore. On the way back from the pond Sue asked if there was something she could do while "we guys" were doing our planning. I pointed to a super thick area of overgrowth between the entrance to the pond and the cement floors we were heading towards. I told Sue that somewhere in there is the sawmill. Go ahead and see if you can find it.

Dan, Nick and I had no sooner gotten to the POW washroom when Sue rushed over to say, "I think I found it!" Somehow, she had worked her way through the thicket, without a lopper, straight to a large cement structure that she thought might be a part of the CCC sawmill.

We were kind of stunned. That was unbelievably quick! We hurried to see what she had found. And what to our wondering eyes did appear? The huge cement base for the sawmill's three-foot-plus diameter saw blade! Some hardware was still attached to it but most of the metal had been broken off and carried away by scavengers.

Over the next few days Nick dug dirt and sod away, down to the base of the cement. It got a foot and a half taller! He unearthed more hardware, a head gasket to the four-cylinder engine that powered the sawmill, and a partial bag of cement. The cement was used to smooth over gouges made in the structure when chunks of wood got caught between the whirling blade and the support. The cement left in the bag hardened to the shape of the bag and some of the bag itself was preserved.



Nearby was a short cement pillar that held up the floor of the sawmill. I knew what it was because when Marty took me to Letchworth, I photographed one just like it. The Letchworth visit also helped me to unravel some of the other mysteries of our site.

The area around the sawmill had been very altered. There was a huge pile of dirt about 150 feet west of the sawmill site that seemed to account for that amount of dirt having been removed from the sawmill site.

I have an aerial photo taken a few years after the POW camp site was dismantled showing more than half of the POW camp and it shows the entire area to be flat. The photo was taken in the early 1950s, and the sawmill itself was still standing! Why had so much of it been dug up? There was even a three-foot deep - east/west - ditch about 50 feet south of the cement structure. What was that used for? To this day, we still don't have the answers!



*Sometime after 1948 everything disappeared except the sawmill and some power poles. (photo gift of Dianne Grimm)*

The sawmill site is one of the most difficult sites in the camp to keep open. Nick and Dan have re-opened it several times. With great difficulty, because of all the digging that had been done there, I have been able to mark all four corners. Nick has filled in the mystery ditch and Dan has cleared a small area to the north that appears to have been the route the CCC boys took to the Park on off hours. (Old wine bottles found in that direction indicate that the CCC boys did some drinking out there, too.)

In early May 2010, I saw two guys in yellow vests walking around the extreme north end of the camp, mostly in the uncleared areas. One of them had a clipboard and they just wandered about from one side of the camp to the other. The following day they were back again, and their wandering seemed concentrated on the sawmill area and the area north of the brush dump.

Finally, they gave up - I could see them shaking their heads - and headed to their car. I decided to get nosy and ask them if I could help them in some way. I introduced myself and I told them I knew a little bit about the area.

They told me they were from the County, and they were looking for a USGS Medallion. It had been placed in that area in the 1930s and he showed me an old drawing. The brass medallion was supposed to be fastened to the top of a cement base at ground level - an X on the drawing. A cement post and a huge tree were shown on the drawing as a means of locating the medallion. They said that Monroe County was in the process of computerizing all of the survey markers in the county and making them part of the satellite GPS system. They were having trouble locating this medallion.

The drawing didn't mean anything to me, but they gave me three satellite photos of the area and said that I could add them to my collection of CCC camp stuff. They were giving up the search and didn't need them anymore. With that, they drove away.

One of the satellite photos showed a red X in a thickly wooded area and not too far away, a gray area I recognized as some of the cement floor of the CCC Tool house and Tool Repair Shop. I went home and figured out a mm to foot scale for the photo. The next day Sue and I went to the Tool House cement with a coil of clothesline, a 300-foot tape measure, and a carpenter's square.

First, we stretched the clothesline along the straight edge of the cement shown in the photo to a point due west of the red X on the satellite photo. Then I put the square on top of the rope and measured my calculated distance 90-degrees from the rope to the red X on the photo. We stomped down tall grass and goldenrod to make a large circle.

Of course, over 70 plus years, there would be considerable dirt and sod on top of the 1930s ground, so I began poking the probe Dan had made me into the ground. I don't think I made more than half a dozen stabs when the probe hit something solid. We forgot to bring a shovel, so Sue and I started kicking dirt away from where the probe had hit something hard. And there it was!!!! The still shiny medallion. I marked it with two white plastic posts and photographed it.



I went home and called the Monroe County offices. The next day I met the two wanderers at the site and led them to the white posts. They posed by it with two of our volunteers and I took their picture.

A short time later I was chatting with a local surveyor friend and after telling him the story of the wanderers he provided me with a copy of the official recorded location of the medallion. The cement post mentioned on it had since been vandalized. The “huge tree” was still there but much larger and laying on the ground. And here’s the kicker. A caption on the document said that the medallion was 207 feet from the NW corner of the CCC sawmill! Even with the giant brush pile in the way we were still able to verify that I had located that corner of the sawmill within a few inches of where the medallion said it should be!

# New Management

When Jay took over full time, he turned out to be just as devoted to the project as Marty was.



*A rare photo of Park Manager Jay Bailey joining in with Sue and Dan.*

Jay helped with some clearing and hired two of those giant dumpsters to be brought to the site. Dan had accumulated a monster pile of picnic table debris that had to be gotten rid of. Fortunately, another SUNY group was scheduled to put some time in at the camp. The job of tossing leftover, partially rotted, picnic table parts into a dumpster was not as much fun as lopping honeysuckle, but the kids got right at it.

The group consisted of about 10 boys and 10 girls. The girls worked much faster and harder than the boys. The boys seemed more interested in watching the girls! Some of the Friends of the Park joined in, too. When they were done, the entire NW end of the CCC camp looked great! All of the important parts of the CCC/POW camp at that end could now be seen in plain sight.

When the dumpsters were hauled away, the only junk that could be seen in the area were a dozen or so huge cement culvert pipes. They were about 12 feet long, thick walled with a 24-inch inside diameter, and weighed several hundred pounds each. They were blocking the west end of the 50-foot-wide road, and we wanted them out of there.

Jay said he thought they would look nice standing on end and half buried, 10 feet apart, lining the western entrance to the CCC site. He'd fill them with potting soil and plant flowers in them. But until that happened, where could we store them?

There was a 100-foot-long, three-foot-deep ditch along the side of the entrance road where it passed the Tool Repair Shop. (It had a water shut-off sticking up at one end of it and it was similar to the ditch Nick filled in near the sawmill site.) We asked Jay if we could put the cement pipes in the ditch. He gave us the okay.

The cement culvert pipes were dropped there in random fashion and were a tangled mass. Small trees and shrubs had grown up among them to tie them together. Dan cut away the trees and used a hydraulic jack to work them free of each other. It took an entire day to get the first two free and slowly roll them towards the ditch. The ground was soft, and Dan had to use a long 2x4 like a pry bar to roll the cement pipes where he wanted them to go.

After the first two, Dan improved on the process and used some of his salvaged picnic table benches to make wooden rails (placed like train tracks) from the twisted pile to the edge of the ditch. Once he got a culvert pipe on the boards it rolled with little effort! Nick and I managed to roll the last few to the ditch when Dan took a day off. They are still in the ditch waiting to be used for something.

Jay took a genuine interest in everything that went on connected to the site. He and his deputy manager, Brett, were the first to record one of the talks I had been giving around the area. He used his DVD camera to tape talk #75 at the Sweden Senior Center - April 12, 2011. That's the one where George Weissenger,

halfway through the presentation, stood up, turned towards the camera, waved his cane in the air, and shouted "I'm here to tell you that the best six-months of my life were spent in the Hamlin CCC camp." And then he sat down.



*George naming the guys in Barracks #4*

Jay found a set of boat docks somewhere in the State Park system and had them moved to Hamlin. He had a plan to place them in Howden Pond and rent flat bottomed boats to campers. The tops of the docks were stored in the little garage Dan had cleaned out and the metal supports were neatly stacked beside the long garage. Unfortunately, Jay was promoted before he could carry out his plan.

The metal parts have since been moved away from the garage and are wasting away nearby.

The Friends of the Park organization flourished while Jay was there. He welcomed the members into the conference room in the new Park Administration Building and then retired to his office. He told us that it was Park Policy for the Park Manager to do all he could to facilitate their programs, but he was not to interfere. He was to have nothing to do with running their meetings, but if they needed him for something, he'd be in his office. Towards the end of the meeting, he would arrive and give us his report on what was going on in the Park.

Author's aside: That policy seems to have been forgotten after Jay left.

Jay liked my suggestion that the old farmhouse be turned into a small CCC/POW museum and visitor's center downstairs - a place to give a tour group a lead-in to the activity. The upstairs rooms would be used to house all of the materials I had been accumulating and a place to lay them out while research was being done. Artifacts could be cleaned and stored there, too. The NYS Department of Historic Preservation in Albany also liked the idea. Albany sent two ladies to Hamlin to teach us how to handle the documents and artifacts. And Letchworth sent their engineer to examine the house and devise a plan for making the building handicap accessible.

Nick, Bunny (a member of the Friends), Sue and I went to a church in the Rochester area that was closing their school building. School furniture was being given away for donations to the church. We pooled our money and for a couple hundred dollars we loaded up folding tables, dozens of stackable chairs, office furniture, an erasable white board, and other miscellaneous items and put them in the old farmhouse. Jay loaned me a key to the house to use and I moved some of my own stuff into the house and began to do my research and writing there. Shortly after that Jay was promoted and moved away, the plan for the house was abandoned and the locks were changed on all of the doors before I could get all of my things out of the building.

Jay was a very good administrator. When Dan heard about Jay's plan to put boat docks in Howden Pond, he remembered that Marty had said once that he would someday like a path around the pond. So, Dan started working on those dreams on his own. He got a 150-foot start when a member of the Friends decided to join in without waiting for an invitation. The latest survey showed that the Park owned a 50-foot border around the pond, but the Friends guy just went off chopping on his own and cut into the neighbor's "jungle." The owner of the neighboring property complained, and Jay shut down the entire operation - as he should have.

Jay ended up having to buy a bunch of trees and have them planted to replace what was cut.

Shortly before that, we started finding arrows with razor blade arrowheads on them stuck in the neatly cleared ground beside and behind Barracks #1 - by the apple trees deer liked to hang around when we weren't there. Due east, about 30 feet into the neighbor's property was that tree stand I mentioned earlier. We took the arrows as we found them to the Park Office, and the Park Police even investigated. I don't think anything was ever done about it and Jay, good administrator that he was, did not bring it up during the pond clearing fracas.

Shortly after that we put the Wednesday Morning Clearing Crew to thinning out (not clearing) the defunct tree CCC nursery between the camp and Moscow Road. The neighbor across the street went nuts. (Weeks before this, he phoned in a complaint that one of the lady members of the Crew brought her dog and didn't put him on a leash - followed by a complaint that he heard Nick using a chainsaw when he wasn't.) Jay immediately shut down the thinning project. Again, as far as I was concerned, Jay had no other choice.

When Jay knew for sure he was to become the manager of the entire Allegheny State Park region, good ole Jay sent what looked like an emergency crew to the CCC site and smoothed out and enlarged the CCC/POW parking lot. It sure looked great with nice clean crushed stone. No more puddles to splash through!



*Present parking lot west of the recreation building looking east into the camp, kiosk in left corner of picture.*

# The Greatest Discovery Yet

From the beginning of the project, I made everyone work around a short piece of lumber that was sticking up 16-inches in the ground a short distance from where we would eventually find the Education Building and west of Barracks #5. It was a piece of a three-inch thick, five-inches wide tongue and groove plank, with a jagged top. Every once in a while some volunteer would give it a kick and I would holler at them to stop! It just might be an artifact!



The Vogt brothers cleared a big circle around it for me and I put a wire flag by it. After Marge Boire gave me enough circumstantial evidence to direct me to the main gate of the POW camp, I studied more closely a blueprint of what a POW stockade was supposed to look like. It showed 33 strands of barbed wire (the bottom two strands buried in the ground), with the other strands closer together at the bottom than at the top. And the fence was supposed to have 2x6 planks as fence posts, six feet apart, all the way around, and 6x6 corner posts. Hmmmm.

The roof boards of the Duffy Mott warehouses were 3x5-inch tongue and groove planks so that the building didn't have to have so much room taken up by trusses. And the canning factories and farmers were allowed by the Army Corps of Engineers to substitute items in the construction of the POW camps. Could it be that instead of 2x6s Duffy Mott loaned the camp some of the 3x5 tongue and groove planks as substitutes? When they were pulled up after the war, could one of them have been accidentally broken off and the stub have been left in the ground? Hmmmm.

One morning I went to the piece of tongue and groove plank sticking out of the ground with a serving spoon from my kitchen. The flat sides of the plank faced east and west and if this was indeed a fence post, a buried strand of barbed wire would have passed by the east side of the plank. So, I started digging a trench across the path of the would-be wire three feet north of the thing sticking out of the ground.

As I dug I flicked a couple pebbles along with some dirt to the side and finally had a little trench about six inches deep. But no wire! Darn! Then I glanced at one of those "pebbles" in the pile of dirt I had dug up. It looked like metal - it was one of the barbs on a strand of barbed wire! I frantically started digging a short ditch towards the plank, along the path of my supposed wire, starting from my first ditch. Very soon I had a section of very corroded barbed wire exposed. Not wanting to screw things up I raced home to get Sue. She was a lot more patient with fussy work and I brought her back to the post to continue unburying the wire.

Sue dug a neat trench to the post and beyond. There was even a fence staple holding the wire to the post. I took a few photos. I was very excited. Now we had a way to figure out exactly where the POW fence ran around the entire camp without having to wait for a photograph of the camp to appear.

I told my friend Shawn Lessord about the discovery (he had already donated and installed the first solar set-up for lighting our flagpole) and he brought his whoopty-do metal detector to the site. He and I followed the signal to the south. Every 20 feet or so, we stopped, and on our hands and knees, dug down to expose the actual wire. I marked it with a wire flag, and we moved on.

When we got to the spot where the bulldozer made the clearing for Mary Smith's reunion, the metal detector lost contact with the wire. Of course! But we kept going on the line traced out by the flags and eventually picked up the signal again - about 15 feet from where the wire took a 90 degree turn to the east.

At the turn, we found the pulpy, partially rotted stump of a 4x4 that was the corner post. Not the required 6x6. But that was okay because they had also violated the "bury the two strands" rule. They only buried one strand!

It was smooth going across the south end of the camp. We found the wire every 20 feet, exposed it and marked it. When we got close to the Infirmary, we didn't even have to dig for a while. Frost action had raised the wire, and it was exposed and hidden with dead leaves and dusty dirt. Then it disappeared into the ground again and we traced it to the main gate where it took another 90-degree turn to the north.

We were already a couple of days into the fun and joy of the find and Shawn worked most the east side of the camp by himself on the third day. He was "turned on" and couldn't stay away. I joined him when it began to get dark, and he was nearing where the next right angle turn back to the west ought to be.



He said he wasn't going to stop until he got to the corner, and he didn't! I took out a flashlight and he continued. Suddenly the wire he was unburying turned into a perfect square. The 4x4 corner post had rotted away but the wire loop around it hadn't. And still he wouldn't quit. He had to make sure the wire continued on to the west. And it did, and Shawn finally packed up!

Shawn and his daughter traced the entire path of the barbed wire across the north end of the camp by themselves. When they got to the NW corner of the camp when all other traces of the CCC camp had been erased near the brush dump, they did manage to find enough scraps of the wire still in the ground to complete the job. There were no NW corner post clues, but they were able to extrapolate where the corner was supposed to be, and they marked it! From there, they proceeded to connect their work with the lone wooden tongue and groove post sticking out of the ground to the south.

# Expanding On The Monumental Discovery of the POW Fence

Now we could separate more clearly the two histories that had gotten mixed together. All the other clues about the POW camp could now be fitted together. We also had two former POWs who had lived in the camp to help us.

One of the first POWs assigned to the camp told me a story about a sit-down strike he helped organize because there was no Recreation Building in the camp. As a result, a Recreation Building suddenly appeared. From a description of the POW Recreation Building remembered by another POW who had migrated back to Hamlin after the war (recorded by Mary Smith) it turns out that the CCC Recreation Building became the POW Recreation Building. The barbed wire that ran by the front of the Recreation Building for a couple of weeks was most probably cut and fastened to the back corners of the CCC Recreation Building and from there to the corner 4x4 post.

The guy wire anchors Sue found turned out to be equally spaced along the sides of the fenced in enclosure to support light poles required by the POW camp but not by the CCC camp. Where the guy wires anchors had been inadvertently destroyed, their locations could be inferred because of the Army's attention to symmetry.

The flat area to the east of the main gate had to be where a guard tower stood. For one thing, Margie Boire said so. For another it was the right size and just around the corner for shooting down the east side of the barbed wire enclosure. Another clue was that it was a curious flat spot at the end of a long ditch.

Another guard tower would have to be located where Shawn turned the corner during his wire search with the aid of a flashlight. It had to be around the corner so that it couldn't be hit by a machine gun in the tower next to the main gate. Evidence of a guard tower at the NW corner was not expected and the guard tower at the SW corner would have to have been unique. Making the Recreation Building part of the POW camp changed its line of sight along the western fence line. But bricks that most likely outlined two of the legs of the guard tower were found in place but have since been shoved away by Park lawn mowers.

The POW who helped organize the sit-down strike also told me where there was a "people gate" in the fence to the south that the guards came through with their guns to investigate the strike. Nick just happened to find an area paved with scrap chunks of cement at that exact location. The pavement in front of a gate would be to prevent a depression being made under the gate for someone to crawl through. Nick found another such paved area near the guard tower at the SE corner.

We know for sure there was a guard tower there because the second POW I was in communication with, stood near it in 1945 while the machine gun was firing the shots nine-year-old Gary Leverenz could hear at the farmhouse.

A search for cement bases for anchoring the corners of the guard towers turned up nothing. Instead, we found four plus foot-long sections of angle iron with bolt holes near one end, close to where the SE guard tower would have been. It is likely that the angle iron was driven into the ground next to each leg of the tower and the tower was bolted to it. And that's the story I'm sticking with until someone comes up with lost photos of the camp!

# The Secret Project

Every winter, the entire NW corner of the camp became flooded. It took weeks for the water to go down. The only way out from the little lake that formed was through the large main exit pipe that was still in place in the open 20x20x10-foot deep septic tank. From there the flood water flowed to Yanty Creek. We shared our concern with Jay, and we took him to where we thought a ditch should be dug to divert the water that was coming from as far away as the farmhouse.

Jay liked the idea but said, "I think the ditch should go from here ….." and so on. Dan took that to mean "permission granted" because it fit a lot of other such assumptions we made since the clearing of the site started. He and Walt teamed up and a diversion ditch was begun.

Walt drove his John Deere with the backhoe on the back into the area where Jay said the ditch should go. He turned the seat around and the backhoe went to work. As Walt dug, Dan held up a long stick with a ruler fastened to it to make sure the new ditch was always moving downhill. In some places the ditch was many feet deep because they were digging through mounds of fill that had been dumped there a long time ago. The ditch was a little over a foot wide and got to be well over a hundred feet long. Now the winter run off could get to Yanty Creek without having to go through the CCC septic system first!

When they were done, I dropped in 40-foot of leftover four-inch flexible perforated plastic pipe in the middle of the ditch. We covered the entire ditch with the salvaged picnic table tops we had stored in the clearing near the garages so that deer wouldn't fall in and hurt themselves.

Next winter and spring, there was no flooding and there hasn't been any since. I don't know the whole story, but in 2023 the road into the camp behind the farmhouse had to be reworked because a galvanized culvert pipe had collapsed and a root ball of a blown down tree had made the road impossible to navigate. The repair included digging a ditch from there all along the backside of Nick's Medina Sandstone wall to our secret picnic tabletop ditch. Then they widened our ditch, made it a little deeper, and put in a 16-inch plastic culvert pipe the entire length. Then they filled in the ditch!

The only thing they left out was a grate of some kind to keep the pipe from filling up with sticks and leaves. Nick and I put an old cast iron barbecue grate over the end of the pipe. When an inspector of some kind visited the site months later, Nick chatted with him. The inspector told Nick he liked the grate that had been added. Not a word about how the ditch got there!

# Progress Comes To A Screeching Halt

I had heard from a Park employee that Jay's replacement had been told to "take back the CCC site from Evans." That didn't make any sense to me. I emailed her to meet me at the CCC site so I could introduce myself and show her what we had been doing. I'll bet she wasn't there five minutes when she said, "You know this site belongs to the Park. Not you." The Park employee must have been right. And for me that explained everything that was to happen over the next four years.

She took a front seat at all of the Friends meetings. And she spoke up whenever she had something to say. As far as I was concerned, the Friends group had already gotten "a little political" and it seemed to get worse in a hurry. They wanted me to set a fee and start charging for my talks with all the money being put in the Friends treasury. To get the Friends to help out at the site I was supposed to make out an agenda ahead of time and provide pizza or something similar.

In the end, the only big projects to get carried out were those previously funded by grants applied for before she got there. They would have been completed before she got there but most things run by the State seemed to move really slow. I had already had posts set where 30 plus story boards were to go and selected and provided some of the photos that were to go on them. I had also written all of the captions.

Someone in the Friends changed a bunch of the captions and I sent an email to the Park Manager to have them changed back. But after that, someone changed a few captions again. A week before the final edited captions were due at the manufacturer, the Park Manager set me up in the kitchen of the Park Administration Building to edit the captions AGAIN.

A few weeks after the story boards (they call them interpretive signs) were finally installed, the little signs that were supposed to go beneath the big ones to show the viewer where they were in the camp, arrived. No one in the Park knew what they were and how to join them with the big signs so they made a procedure up that couldn't possibly work. Nick got me the little signs and hardware and the two of us installed them where they belonged. The paving of four of the walking paths at the south end of the camp had been scheduled while Jay was there, but it didn't happen until he was gone.

Things had gotten to the point at the site where Sue and I could actually mow the entire camp with the two mowers I had donated. Old Allis Chalmers. Dan kept re-engineering and repairing the mowers in our motor pool (e.g. putting grease fittings where there weren't any, inventing a new kind of steering gear, etc.) It took the two of us two days to mow it all, but the site looked like part of a golf course when we were through. (Nick did the trimming with his walk-behind push mower.)



One of the mowers was really getting ornery. John Deere mowers were on sale and Sue and I bought one and asked the Friends to reimburse us. We knew they had the money. All kinds of

arguments against it started up. Sue finally told them to forget it and we left the meeting - for good.

With that the new Park Manager solved the whole problem. She told me to get all of our equipment out of the two garages a.s.a.p. The Park would take over the maintenance of the site! We had already been locked out of the house and now the garages. I had no place at home for all of the equipment that belonged to me (three lawn tractors, wagons, a trailer, Swisher, wheelbarrow, etc.) so I had to cover it all with a tarp in my backyard until I could find people to give it to. A lot of it went to North Carolina.

Dan was more ticked-off than I was. He sent me home with all of the many hundreds of dollars' worth of tools he had in the garages, and I had to find homes for them too.

We watched the camp get overgrown and blowdowns just sat there. But Nick kept working, alone at first, and was unacknowledged and unappreciated. Then, when I didn't think things could get worse, they got worse!

While checking out the site one evening on my way to my nightly walk in the Park, I saw smoke at the NW corner of the camp where the Blacksmith Shop used to be. When I got back there, I saw that rubbish pulled from the charcoal grills in the park was being dumped there. It had obviously been going on for some time and the last dumping must have had some still glowing charcoal in it. Much of the garbage around it was smoldering. When I got home, I emailed the new Park Manager to tell her - in case she didn't know it already - that garbage was being dumped next to the location of the old CCC Blacksmith shop. I also told her about the smoke.

The next day when I checked the site again, I saw that more charcoal grill leavings had been dumped there and some of it was still smoking. The next morning, I went to the site and took pictures and prepared an email to Letchworth. The email contained a photo of the smoking pile of garbage and a copy of the aerial map of the CCC site with an X marked on it showing the exact location of the pile of smoking garbage next to the Blacksmith Shop. I also attached a photo of the sign on the east gate into the CCC site that read "No Dumping."

Very soon (It might have only been two days later) I saw a large dumpster parked close to the pile of garbage. Over the next couple of days, the entire area was scraped clean of rubbish. Mud puddles and tire ruts were gone, too. The entire area had been carefully restored! Even so, I never thought that I would ever have to go to such extremes to get a Park Manager to respect a historic site on Park property.

# My Final Thoughts

We are into our second year of another new Park Manager. I can't fault him for anything given all that he has had to put back in order around the entire Park. There is also a new President of the Friends who is making things better. Friends of the Park membership is way up and the CCC/POW site seems to be more a part of their goals. She has taken upon herself to re-organize a Friends of the Park website and she has asked me to supply some material about the CCC/POW project.

The Park has also hired someone to promote all kinds of educational and environmental programs in the Park. She has a title and an office! I have given her long tours of the site. I have also spent many hours in the Park conference room filling her in on what I know about the Park in general as well as Yanty Marsh and the Nature Trail, and the CCC/POW camp. I have also supplied her with maps, documents, and articles I have written. This past summer she has even begun giving tours of the site.

I think things are looking up for the site. Nick continues to work there with his grandsons and a couple of senior citizens who say they need the exercise. I have stopped giving tours and talks after #236 but if something really big happens and some real important organization wants to look into what I might know about the site, I could come out of retirement.

In the meantime, I offer this story so that what happened behind the scenes during the reclaiming of this historic site will not be forgotten. As it is, I have already realized I have left out some real important stuff.

There's the story of Dan putting in 234 hours to Bill Manley's 166 hours over one winter working in the snow and slush to keep the unburying going. And what about Bill Amos who worked with Nick through a winter?

There's the story of a young man named Conner Dowd who volunteered for community service. Nick supervised and he and Conner bonded. Even after he had earned his service hours, Conner refused to quit. He worked with Nick until he enrolled in Monroe Community College. He now lives in New England.




*Conner Dowd (left) volunteer who kept working, two county guys and Sue where the USGS medallion from 1935 was found.*

There's a story about Dan buying (at his expense) a 3.5 horse-powered "come-along" to drag stumps the size of a VW Beatle across the site - zig zagging from tree to tree - to where the Park's loader could pick them up and carry them off.

There are many more stories and names that should be mentioned, but I have to end this somewhere. There will be a website up soon for the Hamlin CCC/POW site. One of the things on the menu will be the three journals I kept during the uncovering of the camp. The first two journals (diaries, actually) have been put on it and the third will be turned over to the website now that this story has been finished.

Finally, I have a few hundred pounds of CCC/POW photos, documents, maps, interview transcripts, DVDs, and artifacts that people have

given to me, and they all need a home. The Park doesn't seem to want them. The State told me once that they wanted to take it all to Albany and put it in file cabinets. But I want it to be close to the site where local people can use it within sight of the CCC/POW camp. The Park once had a plan to put it in a reconfigured farmhouse next door but when that plan was changed suddenly, the Park became silent on the subject.

People have taken to referring to that building as the Haunted House on Moscow Road. I'd like to live long enough to hear it called "Hamlin's CCC Heritage House." But I am worried about the house because of what I saw happen to the barn behind the house.

The barn was more of a part of the CCC camp than the house was. The CCC boys made sandstone drinking fountains and fireplaces in there and I have seen evidence that they even played basketball in there.



*This is Gary Leverenz, the 9-year-old boy who lived in the farmhouse next door to the POW camp in 1945. During this visit to the site in 2009, he stopped to look at the barn where he kept his pony. The farmhouse is out of the picture to the left. [Note the section of barn roof that was never put back to right after an inspection of the rafters.]*

But before I got involved in the CCC camp, the Park decided to do a study to determine whether it was practical to invest in a new roof for the barn. The study called for the removal of all the roofing materials on one of the western sections of the gambrel roof - all the way down to the rafters! (?????) After the study the rafters remained naked for a couple of years.

Of course, the barn started to lean to the west. A representative of the power company that served the area said the company would donate power poles to hold the barn wall in place until the roof could be repaired but Marty told me the Park declined the offer.

I quickly videotaped a walk around the barn and through every room in the barn and took a stack of still photos for posterity. My wife painted a beautiful picture of the barn. A couple of our volunteers went up into the hay loft where a lot of prime lumber was neatly stored on racks and salvaged some that we might be able to use at the site. Then a crew arrived to tear the barn down.

Marty told the contractor that I wanted them to save for me the little round window with the white trim around it high on the east side of the barn. It was the window in the photo of Al Chike that got us started clearing our second path. They said they would - but they didn't.

When the barn was just a big pile of wood on the ground, one of our volunteers asked the contractor how much the Park was paying them to have the barn taken down. He said $25,000. Then he was asked how much he thought it would have cost to restore the barn. He said, $25,000.

That's why I'm worried about the house!

E. Evans - October 8, 2024

# Epilogue - Our CCC/POW Camp is Doing What A Historic Site Is Supposed To Do

One day as I reported to work at the site, I spotted 89-year-old Hazel Lake wandering around the CCC camp with her daughter. She was carrying, folded in half, one of those long, narrow group photos taken when her husband-to-be, George, lived in the camp. George's face was lost in the crinkled crease of the fold, but she also had a winter snapshot of him standing alone in front of Barracks #1.

George Lake enjoyed his 1930s enlistment with the CCC in Hamlin but missed his girlfriend in Medina. Every weekend George walked 30 miles to Medina to be with her. Once in a while he got lucky and got a lift part of the way, but he almost always arrived late back in the camp. Usually, he got extra KP for the tardiness. George passed away some time ago and Hazel was curious to have a look at the camp from which George walked all that way to see her.



*George Lake (CCC camp graduate), January 1937, standing (facing south) in front of barracks #1.*

I introduced myself to her and offered to show her where the photographer was standing when he took that long group photo. I pointed to the location in the Mess Hall where George probably did most of his extra KP duty and then I showed her where George's barracks had stood. She made it around the entire site and asked lots of questions. Over the next couple of years, Hazel showed up with other members of her family for a repeat tour! She had the crease in the long photo professionally repaired and gave me a copy along with the family-compiled collection of stories George had told them about the six months he spent in our camp.



*Center section of Hazel's folded photo. George Lake, smack dab center, Group CCC picture*

Then I got a call from a lady in Kendall who heard about our project. She had a large paper bag of 100 plus letters written to a guy in the Hamlin CCC camp and asked if I wanted them. I wasted no time getting to her house!

Cora Bissell had purchased the bag at a yard sale in front of a house that burned to the ground a month later. It contained letters and a bunch of other stuff, but none of what Cora had hoped to find in the bag. The letters were addressed to James Giancaterin, Barracks #5, Hamlin, New York. His friends called him Jimmy G.

Jimmy G was from downtown Rochester and his father had just died in a workplace fire. Jimmy quit school at the end of his junior year and signed up for the CCC to help his mother (who spoke no English) support her family. He was bright, outgoing, and a good worker. He sang solo at weekly talent contests between the five barracks, worked for the camp's weekly

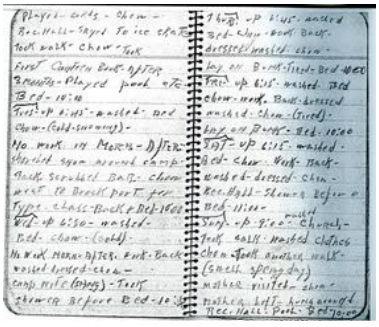
newspaper, and earned the nickname "Lady Killer."

Unlike George Lake, but like a great many other CCC "graduates," Jimmy G never shared his CCC experiences with any of his family. But it is obvious that he treasured every minute of his CCC experience! That paper bag he stashed in Kendall was stuffed with items secreted away to remind someone, someday, what a great experience his year and a half in the CCC had been! Aside from the 133 letters there were two spiral bound, pocket sized, diaries full of very neatly penciled-in entries. The bag also contained a stack of the newspapers the camp produced – all issues the Hamlin Historian did NOT have! And 60 negatives of photos he took, his CCC enlistment paperwork, and other miscellaneous items!



*Jimmy G on his way to Nevada.*

In all of the CCC research I have done since our project began, I have never heard about anybody ever coming across a CCC diary. When a story about my find appeared in a local newspaper, someone recognized the Giancaterin name in it and sent a scan of the article, via email, to an 'about to retire' Rochester middle school teacher. That teacher was one of Jimmy G's daughters and when she finally discovered the article on her computer monitor, she broke down in tears. Her father had long since passed away and she had absolutely nothing that he ever touched. And she knew nothing about his CCC experience. She immediately tried to contact me


*Two pages from Jimmy Giancaterin's diary*

She and her husband came to my house, and I showed her the contents of that paper bag. She agreed that it should be kept with the CCC site we had unburied, but I gave her a few items that her father had "touched." A short time later, she put on a dinner at her house for her siblings and their spouses and I delivered one of my CCC presentations, slide-screen and all. They have all since visited the site and have attended some of my other presentations around this area. I even provided the entertainment for a Giancaterin family reunion in downtown Rochester. One granddaughter was inspired enough to make an A++ DVD about our camp for a college course she was taking!

And then there was that large rock behind the new Hamlin Beach State Park Administration Building. Park Manager Jay Bailey wanted to know if it was an old grave marker of some kind, or did it have something to do with the Park?



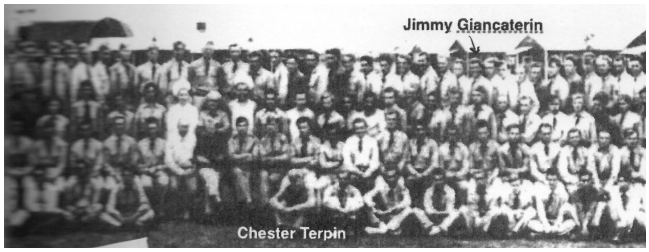
The rock had some chisel work done on it by a wanna-be (obvious amateur) stone cutter. The top was contoured somewhat like an antique metal tractor seat and "Terpin" in large letters had been



*Chester Terpin's CCC rock (rock photo enhanced by Suburban News).*

chiseled on a rather rough face. Local lore said that some ice age Indian sitting on the rock in a fit of rage put the dent in it, but Jay wasn't buying that.

There were no "Terpins" in the Rochester area phone books, but there was a "Terpin" listed as being in one of those long, narrow CCC group photos high on the wall in the Hamlin Historian's Museum. Jimmy G was also in that photo, so I




went through Jimmy G's collection of CCC camp newspapers and found an article listing some "new inductees from Buffalo." As luck would have it, one of those new inductees was a "Chester Terpin!" I wrote a letter to the three Terpins in the Buffalo phone book and got an answer back. "Chester Terpin was my father!"

I invited the entire Chester Terpin family to Hamlin. They all sat on the rock for a photo-op



and then we went to the unburied CCC site. Like Jimmy G, Chester never told anyone about his CCC experience and the Terpin family really enjoyed hearing about what went on in the camp as I gave them a tour. As we walked, little idiosyncrasies they had noticed in their father over the years suddenly explained themselves. The Army kitchen sized pies and artificial ice cream (a special Hamlin CCC recipe) he often cooked up, the tools he made from scratch, the house he built by himself, the tents he made, and the only Medina Sandstone barbeque in their part of town, all of a sudden made sense. When his youngest daughter learned about what went on in the CCC Education Building she shouted to everyone, "Now I get it! That's how a man with a sixth-grade education was able to help me with my algebra!"

As a teenager, Chester was "running the numbers" for mobsters in Buffalo and his mother was worried he might get shot. She forced him to sign up for the CCC. He was short, extremely shy and had terrible acne, which probably explained why he looked away when you spoke to him. Six weeks in the CCC camp and his acne went away! Probably because of the fresh air and improved diet. He signed up for every educational course he could, and learned about every skill his family gave him credit for in the CCC camp we just uncovered. After the CCC he joined the military and was promoted to Sergeant – twice. As a family man, he spent his summers camping with his family, but only in NYS camps that had been built by the CCC. He was in the process of doing that camping circuit again with his grandchildren when he passed away.

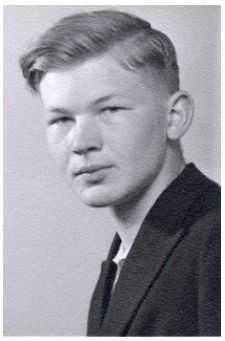
If the Hamlin CCC/POW camp had not been unburied, Hazel Lake's family would never have bothered to collect George Lake's CCC memories. If the camp had not been unburied Jimmy G's contributions to our knowledge of the Hamlin history and American history that took place at 966 Moscow Road would never have come to light. And without Jimmy G's paper bag we would have been stuck with the story of some Indian denting the rock behind the Park

offices and Chester's family would never know what made their father so unique.

Over in Germany, two former German soldiers in their late 80s - who had survived WWII as POWs - lived 11 miles apart but were complete strangers. One at a time, I became pen pals with Heinrich Willert and Gottfried Schultze. Good things happened and Heinrich's grandson and I were able to meet at Niagara Falls during the Hamlin unburying. Afterwards, Matthias Heinicke went back to Germany and arranged for the two WWII veterans to finally get to know each other. Another happy ending! If the Hamlin CCC/POW camp had not been unburied, Heinrich and Gottfried would never have learned that in 1944 they lived in the same barracks, at the same time, and their bunks were 50 feet apart - in the Hamlin POW camp! Thanks to the unburying, they were able to spend the last few years of their lives enjoying each other's company, reliving the good times they enjoyed when they were "our guests" here in Hamlin.



*Gottfried Schulze (left) and Heinrich Willert (right) who shared Barracks #3 at the POW camp in Hamlin meet in Germany to share memories of more than 65 years ago while in the POW camp.*



*Gottfried Schulze, German POW at Hamlin as a young man and soldier in WWII. Gottfried worked at the Duffy Mott plant in Hamlin while a prisoner.*



*German POW at Hamlin, Heinrich Willert as a German Soldier in WWII.*

Research about German POW camps here in the United States is now being done at two new locations in Germany, prompted by the work done here on Moscow Road.