Some of….Everything I Know About

the Hamlin CCC/POW Camp

Dedication and Introduction

Ed hastily put together this book in 2018 to get something on paper before "something happened to me." The NYS Department of Historical Preservation has a "yellow cover copy" of this booklet (the yellow cover copy booklet did not have the benefits of the services of an editor, and it contains many simple typos and at least one sentence that doesn't make sense because of an extra word.)

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This little book is dedicated to Mary Smith, who kept the memory of the Hamlin CCC/POW camp alive while the US Army, the State of New York, and Mother Nature conspired to erase it from history.

Any research of this historic Site should begin with a reading of Mary's 1985 CCC Reunion Booklet and pages 121 to 142 of her Remembering Hamlin book.

It has now been edited and formatted with pictures added by Marleen M. Cain (2025).

Everything I Know About The Hamlin CCC Camp

[Mary Smith got me off to a good start.]

by Ed Evans - January 2018

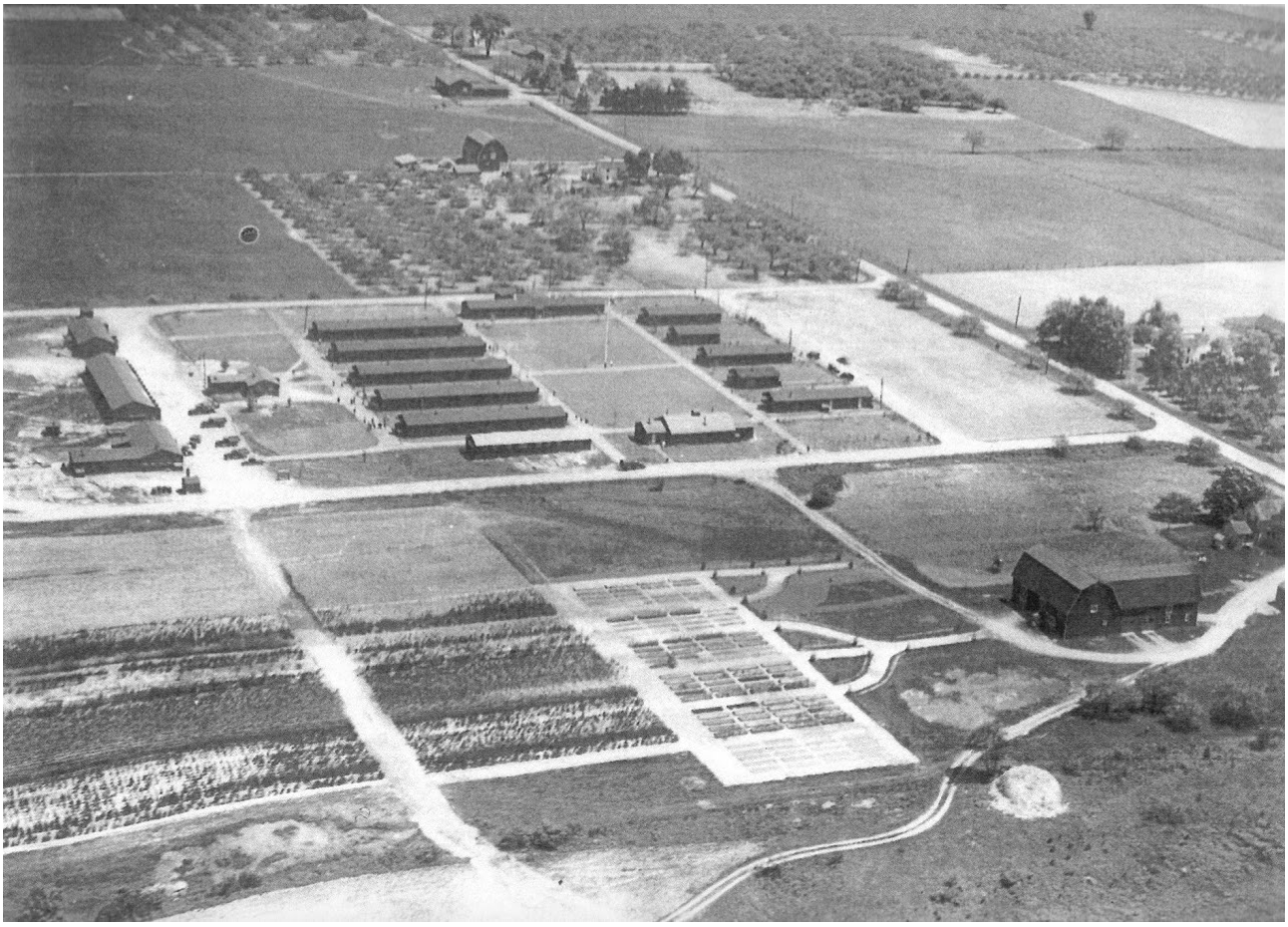
There is a very valuable historical attraction on State property that borders the old farmhouse property located at 968 Moscow Road in Hamlin. In the 1930s and early 1940s, the eight acres to the east of the farmhouse were the site of what resembled a small village, complete with over two dozen buildings of various sizes, its own water and sewer system, packed gravel streets, two entrances off the county road, a sawmill, and a purpose for being there.

The little village on Moscow Road was part of a program Franklin Roosevelt dreamed up to relieve some of the stress of the great depression. At the time of his election, unemployment had hit 25%. One in every four members of the United States work force was without a job. In other words, one family in every four families had difficulty putting food on the table.

Franklin was convinced that those distressed families had at least one healthy male at home, between the ages of 17 and 26, who was capable of doing a day's work. Roosevelt did not approve of welfare (called "relief" in the 1930s) because the country got nothing back for the money paid out, but he also knew America was in need of improvements in its infrastructure. First on his list was the nation's forests. U.S. paper mills were clear-cutting huge forests but weren't replacing the trees. Plywood had been invented, and lumber companies were also clear-cutting forests to meet the demand and were not replacing the trees. The country was also plagued with forest fires (fire towers and fire trails were in the future) and hundreds of thousands of acres of burned trees were never replanted. Franklin Roosevelt thought that the healthy young males in the distressed families could be signed up to replant those forests.

Roosevelt proposed a plan suggesting that young men in families receiving relief (welfare) be offered a chance to sign up for his "tree army" (a tongue in cheek nickname given to the program early on). The enlistment would last six months, and the young men would be paid $1 a day. Paydays would be once a month. On payday, $25 would be sent home to his family and the enlistee would keep $5 to spend as he saw fit. In addition to the $30 a month in exchange for his labor, the program would provide him with three hearty meals a day, clothing[1], a warm bed, medical care, recreation, and a variety of educational opportunities.

[1] In 1933 there were warehouses full of surplus WWI uniforms and Roosevelt put unemployed seamstresses to work altering them to fit all sizes and shapes of young men.



This aerial photo shows "the village" as it looked in the late summer of 1938.

In the 40 days immediately following his election (repeat, 40 days), Roosevelt convinced his cabinet that the program would work, got it passed in the Senate, appointed the first director,[2] signed up the first enlistee, and got the first camp up and running! Two and a half months later, 275 thousand men had signed up and 1300 camps were up and running. It was to be called the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Eventually, work would be expanded to include road building, bridge and dam projects, reclamation of farmland, fighting forest fires, erection of fire towers, the creation of local, state and national parks, and many other projects. By the time the program ended in 1942, over three million young men would serve in over 4500 camps across the entire country and all of its possessions.

In 1935, someone in the New York State government convinced someone in the CCC organization that a small, not very fancy county park along Hamlin's Lake Ontario shore should be turned into a beautiful State Park. The kind of thing the Civilian Conservation Corps liked to get involved in! But this project would take years to

[2] The labor unions did not like the plan because it messed with the prevailing wage. So, Roosevelt appointed the head of a major union to run his program!

complete so the camp that housed the workers would have to be a little more durable than some of the other CCC camps in the area.[3]

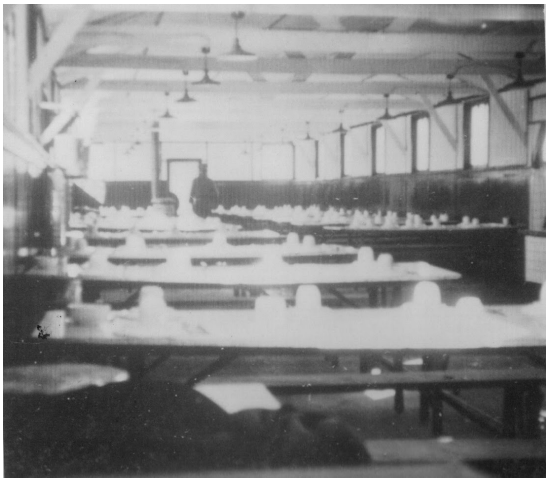


Inside a Barracks

Like the other CCC camps around the country, the Hamlin camp was built to house 200 enlistees and up to 50 support staff.[4] The five barracks were over 100 feet long, 20 feet wide and each one contained 40 cots and three large coal-burning pot-bellied stoves for heat. A ladder hanging on the side of each barracks was used whenever a tar paper roof caught fire.

Each barracks also had an A.M. radio for the enjoyment of the enlistees after the workday ended.

The Mess Hall was the largest building in the camp. It was designed to feed 250 men in one sitting with room enough to keep the men from bumping the eating arm of the guy next to him. The food was cooked on two giant cast-iron coal-fired ranges with 10 lids each for the cooks to lift to check the fire. Near the stoves was a dishwashing area. A long counter for food pick-up separated the kitchen from the dining area. Food cold storage was provided outside the building, on the north side of the kitchen.



Hamlin CCC Mess Hall, at the very right of the picture is the counter where food was placed from the kitchen to be picked up to eat. The counter runs across the end of the kitchen wing of the mess hall (kitchen wing is off the east side of the mess hall building). The dishwashing area was right behind the counter and there were three cast-iron 10-hole ranges that burned hard coal where all the food was cooked. Some of the tables still exist in Hamlin Beach State Park in shelters #1 and #3. Some of them have numbers on them that were painted on the tables when the camp became a POW camp for assigned tables for the larger number of POWs. There are more at Hamlin Beach SP but the numbers were sanded off. The tables were built by the CCC guys.

The floors of the dining room were washed down regularly and the mop water was

[3] Letchworth State Park had four CCC camps and only one of them was in use for more than a year - and that "one" was in use less than a year and a half. Many of the other CCC camps around the country were primarily tent camps that could be easily packed up when a job was done and moved down the road to the site of the next project on Franklin Roosevelt's list. Hamlin's camp, however, was used during the building of Hamlin Beach State Park from 1935 until 1941.

[4] According to Town Historian Mary Smith's records, the number of enlistees living in the Hamlin camp never quite reached the 200-mark. The population was usually around the 180s.

squeegeed to holes in the floor over a ditch that drained away from the building. Wastewater from the kitchen was piped to the outside and treated before emptying into the camp's sewer system.

And Roosevelt wasn't kidding about the meals! It was published in a book about the Letchworth CCC camps that on a typical day - after breakfast - the CCC kitchens put out 220 loaves of bread, 1400 cookies or cakes, 90 pies, 500 ears of corn, 700 hot dogs, 14 gallons of spinach, 12 gallons of cherries, nine hams, and two bushels of beans. Two young men from the NYC area came to the Hamlin camp weighing 96 and 102 pounds. After six months of eating in the Hamlin CCC Mess Hall, one fellow weighed in at 138 and the other at 146!

The national average weight gain by CCC enlistees was 11 to 15 pounds in three months.



Rec Hall Stage

The Recreation Building was almost as important to the health of the young men as the Mess Hall. It was another large building occupying the space on the side of the camp directly across from the Mess Hall. One end of the building housed the camp store where the men could buy candy, pop, writing paper, stamps, toiletries, and small gifts. The floor at the other end of the building was raised a little to serve as a stage. One night a week, the stage was used for Camp Night - a night where each barracks was required to put on some kind of entertainment. The barracks with the best judged show scored points towards the weekly competition to determine the "Best Barracks in the Camp."

The winner of each week's competition got to ride in trucks to Rochester on Sunday to see a sports event and stop for ice cream on the way back.

The center section of the Recreation Building featured four ping pong tables, a magazine rack, tables to play cards and board games on, some chairs and a sofa. Eventually, the men saved enough nickels and dimes out of their pay to buy two pool tables that were often mentioned in the camp newspaper they published.

Brockport's Strand Theater provided some of the seating seen in one old photo (far left side).

In 1942, Roosevelt's CCC program was shut down. The war was on and there were plenty of jobs for everyone not serving as soldiers. But, as luck would have it, the CCC had supplied America with over three million young men already used to sleeping in barracks, taking orders, and working as a unit. Without them, the history of the war would have been written differently.

The Hamlin CCC camp closed a little earlier. By the middle of 1941 there were not enough young men on relief in the area to begin to fill the 200 beds. Even though we were not in the war yet, the war industry in Rochester's end of the state had opened up too many jobs. For some reason, however, the Hamlin camp was not dismantled. It remained empty for a year and a caretaker was hired to watch over it. Eventually, new uses were found for it. Migrant workers brought to the U.S. to help relieve the labor shortage caused by the war lived in the camp during the summer of 1943. Italian prisoners of war took their place in the fall. When the Italians moved out, German POWs moved in in 1944. In January of 1946, many months after the war was over for them, the last Germans left the camp after helping to close it down for good.



Jim Gavigan, caretaker after the CCC camp closed and before it became the POW camp and before the Bahamians arrived. Standing on street #2 facing northeast. The mess hall is at the end of the road in the picture. Administration buildings are behind him.

Slowly, the buildings disappeared in no particular order. Those that were not carted off eventually rotted in place. In 1956, the State Park system started to establish a tree nursery on the site but abandoned the project after six weeks of destroying important parts of the historic site and who knows how many artifacts. From then on, the Park system and the NYS Department of Transportation used the area to store (as in 'dump') surplus materials of all kinds while nature proceeded to take back the entire acreage.



159 people, 60 migrants, 99 locals (Bahamians 1943) inside the education building showing the north end of the building. Here because of the labor shortage in the local farm fields (1942-43).

In 1985, Town Historian Mary Smith decided to put on her second reunion of the Hamlin CCC camp. (Her first one was in 1980.) This time it was to be held on the site of the old CCC camp. The Park helped out (?) by bulldozing the area that used to lie between the flagpole and the recreation building, destroying more artifacts in the process. Then they erected what they called a replica of the original CCC flag pole in the center of the new clearing and pretended it was located exactly where the real one once stood. (For the record, they weren't even close.)

It was my first year as Councilman for the Town of Hamlin and liaison to the Town Historian, and in that capacity, I volunteered to videotape the affair with my very first Beta Max video camera. The old CCC enlistees that attended impressed the heck out of me with their stories and old black and white photos. From that day forward, I vowed to learn as much as I could about the Hamlin CCC camp that was hidden beneath 40 years' worth of nature's wrath and determination to take back those eight acres.

Unfortunately, the Park did not cooperate with my efforts. They let the little 1985 reunion clearing fill back in and would not allow me to enter the site for any reason. They kept saying that there was "nothing left in there to see." But when the Hamlin Conservation Board found and documented unmarked 50-gallon drums full of 'who knows what' on the site, I got my first look at the interior of the old campsite. Two huge heaps of Medina sandstone that used to be sea wall in the Park before the 1973 storms and flooding, cluttered up the area to the west of where the latrine once stood. A 14 foot high, 200 foot long mountain of broken picnic tables all but hid the



There were over 300 picnic tables in the pile.

sandstone heap from view, 1200 pound lengths of antique cement culvert pipe blocked access to what used to be a 50-foot-wide gravel road at the north end of the CCC camp, and the trunks of half rotted trees three and four feet across were neatly stacked 10 feet high covering the cement that used to be the floor of the CCC Tool House. A couple of miles of obsolete railroad tie sized wooden guard rails that used to line a section of the Lake Ontario Parkway were stacked in piles six feet high at the very center of the site. Shortly after the removal of the oil drums, Marty Howden became Park Manager, and my luck changed.

After his first few weeks on the job, Marty invited me to meet with him and actually ended up asking me if I knew anything about an old CCC campsite that was "rumored" to be located on Park property. Then he asked me if I thought it could be made into a history trail. THEN he asked me the big question. Would I help him turn the site into

a History Trail? The very next day, June 8, 2008, my son Jesse, my wife Sue, and I started clearing what we thought might be the east/west "street" across the southern end of the camp!

Clearing the site was not easy. Fallen trees over 100 feet tall and two or three feet in diameter were everywhere. Wild grape vines - some three inches thick - hung from the healthy trees they were slowly strangling. Wild rose bushes, with thorns so big we called them "shark's teeth on a stick," grew in clumps that were impossible to walk through. Honeysuckle flourished everywhere the sharks teeth didn't and provided another tangle that was difficult to cut through. School kids, college students, senior citizen "clearing crews," court assigned laborers, some history buffs and a few dedicated regular volunteers worked all four seasons for eight years to turn the old campsite into something that now resembles a golf course.



Cleared site being mowed by Ed and Sue.

To give special credit where special credit is due, Dan Wilson single handedly made the pile of picnic tables vanish.



Nick Kramer, Dan and Walt Fisher relocated the 41 tons of Medina sandstone. (The Park originally requested placing on pallets then abandoned that request. Stone was used to create a wall on the west side of the camp and education building.

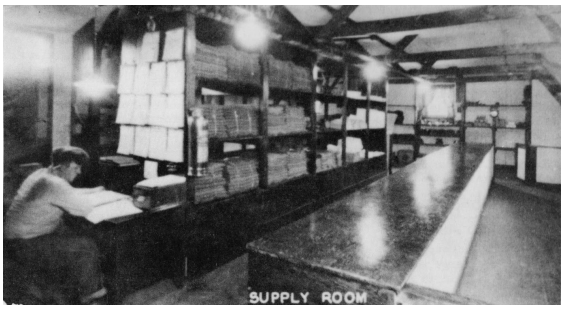


Dan, Nick, and I freed up and rolled the cement culvert pipes into a nearby open ditch for safe keeping.

Walt and his John Deere tractor took care of the old guard rails.



One of the first CCC building sites that popped into view during the early clearing of the site was the CCC building called Army Headquarters. Actually, it was better known as the Supply Building.[5] The cement slab



Supply Building, first building on the west end of street #2, camera is pointing down the aisle to the south end of the building. Sergeant Shanley is sitting at the desk.

that served as a floor on the inside of the covered entrance to the building (e.g. the stoop) was right where it was put in 1935! An 80-foot-long dent in the ground clearly marked the exact location of the entire building. The stoop outside one of the side doors of the supply building was buried but intact. Mysterious pieces of metal were still sticking up from the ground near the NE corner of the building site. The gravel driveway leading to the loading platform on the east side of the building was easy to locate. Tree roots in the area could not penetrate the gravel and a huge butternut tree was growing on top of the driveway!

Before the discovery of the Supply Building's cement stoop, most of our work was based on good guesses. Instead of estimations based on what we saw in old photographs, we now had a landmark that had never been disturbed. The stoop was like a survey marker! That cement stoop was the beginning of our being able to identify all five of the administration building locations at the southern end of the CCC camp. The discovery that dents in the ground also occurred wherever wooden floors of a building used to sit, helped greatly in verifying building sites.[6]

With the exception of the row of buildings at the north end of the camp and the latrine's washroom, the CCC buildings all had wooden floors positioned about one foot above ground level. These wooden floored CCC buildings had no foundations but the floors were supported from underneath by a series of wooden posts. All but one of these floor support posts from the hundreds used throughout the camp 'disappeared' after 1946 when the buildings left the site and the dents in the ground became visible.

That one floor support post just happened to be in the exact center of the Infirmary 'dent in the ground.' The convenience of the

[5] It was recently discovered that some of this building was actually standing many years after the rest of the buildings were long gone. Local kids in the 1960s called what was left of the building "the shed".

[6] Most of the buildings in the CCC camp were built over flat ground. Prior to the arrival of the carpenters, no excavation of the dirt surface was done for any of them (with the possible exception of the ditches under the Mess Hall floor and the water and sewer pipes for the Army Officers Quarters, the Infirmary, and the Department of Interior Quarters). But somehow - wind, freezing and thawing everywhere except where there was a floor, or perhaps the lack of vegetation where a building sat, a dent in the ground always developed under the wooden floors of a CCC building.

find became more extraordinary when bits of buried plumbing were uncovered. Not only did toilet and sink drains show up but the main shut-off valve on the two-inch water line coming from the Brockport pumping station was right where it was installed.[7] That find spawned some mystery!

According to records and blueprints, the Infirmary was supposed to be 20 feet wide. In other words, measurements from center of the building to either side wall should be 10 feet. However, when you measure, to the east, 10 feet beyond the center floor support we found, the water shut-off would have been under the Infirmary! That couldn't be! According to the center post, the Infirmary was NOT 20 feet wide - it was probably 18 feet wide.

The Infirmary was supposed to be just as wide as the other "little" building in the row of five at the south end of the camp but two feet longer. It just so happened that there were two "little" buildings at the nearby Salvation Army Summer Camp[8] three miles away that could have come from the CCC camp after it was dismantled. As it turned out, one of the little buildings at the Salvation army camp was two feet longer than the other. One was 20 feet wide, and the other was 18 feet wide!

The Salvation Army camp was in the process of being sold to a developer in 2015 and the developer offered to donate the two buildings to the CCC reclamation site. State Park representatives from Albany visited both camps and determined that because the little buildings contained no markings that proved beyond doubt that they were from the Hamlin CCC camp, they couldn't be moved onto Park property! The Albany people also noted that the buildings in question had plywood on the inside walls. According to them, the CCC buildings didn't.[9]

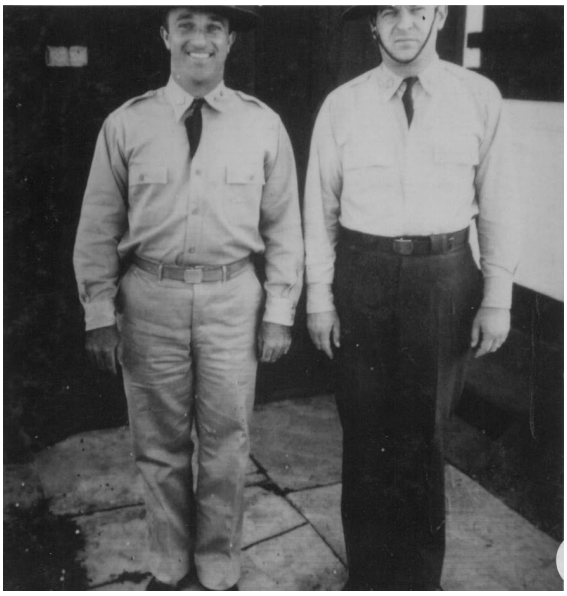
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[7] When the camp first opened, the water supply for the camp came from a dug well. Very soon the well proved to be very inadequate. The water smelled terribly bad, and the well could not produce anywhere near as much water as was needed to run the camp. The problem was quickly solved by tapping into the water line going to the future "state park" from the Brockport pumping station along the path the future Lake Ontario State Parkway would take. The two-inch water line (or maybe three-inch) came into the camp from the north, passed under the 13-bay garage, and was spliced into the water line from the well into the latrine washroom. (Every bit of the tap-in plumbing at the latrine is still in full view in a cement vault which is part of the latrine foundation.) A pipe that already existed from the latrine to the Infirmary now carried the "good water" to the shut off valve we found. It is assumed that the water to the Mess Hall, Army Officer's Quarters and the Department of Interior Quarters was controlled by the same valve.

[8] The CCC camp closed at about the time the Salvation Army camp was built.

[9] I have a copy of *The Hamlin Special*, the newspaper the CCC boys put out, that mentions that plywood was put on the inside walls of the latrine, barracks and the administration buildings in 1938 (probably to make them warmer in the winter). I sent that information to Albany, but it didn't change anyone's minds. The little buildings were destroyed in 2016.

As the clearing of the south end of the camp along Street #2 continued, it became easier and easier to reconcile our findings with the aerial photo of the camp on the cover of Mary Smith's 1985 fifty-page publication about the Hamlin CCC camp. Two cement slabs that served as doorstops were found at the south end of the dent in the ground that the Department of Interior Quarters created. The cement stoop at the north end of that building had been smashed but the pieces were close to where they should be. An elaborate array of door stoop cement was found at the north end of the Army Officer's Quarters, and we had an old photo showing a detail of the arrangement. Those



stoops all served as survey markers and enabled us to begin to narrow down our search for the site of the CCC flagpole that would mark for us the exact center of the camp.

To that end, every so often, I made another educated guess at where the latest measurements said the flagpole should be and moved my wooden post with its sharp iron tip accordingly. Supposedly, every move of the post - every tape measure refinement - got it closer and closer to the location seen in the aerial photo. One afternoon I moved the post, but I couldn't drive it into the ground where the latest measurement said it should go. I tried several locations within a two-foot circle, but I kept hitting something hard in the dirt. I got a hoe from my truck and that "hard something" turned out to be the huge, circular, cement base that supported the actual CCC flagpole! In the center was the stump of that flagpole that once stood nearly 70 feet tall! What a find! It made my day and monopolized my conversations for a couple of weeks!

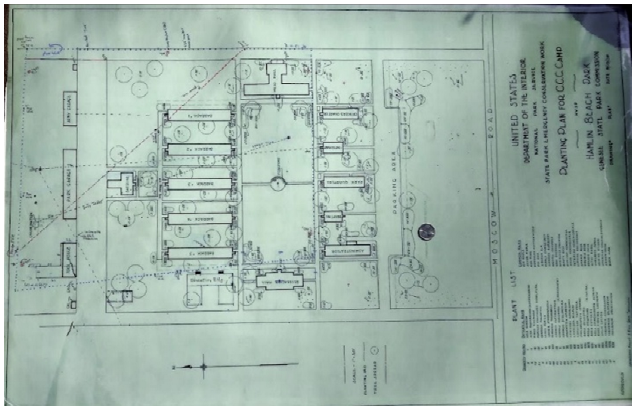


Flagpole and fire alarm system. Camera looking north.

Now, there wasn't a thing in the aerial photo of the CCC camp that I couldn't find. And we came by another tool about the same time. In order to show where the Army's crews were to plant various kinds of trees and

shrubs around the new camp, a scale map showing the locations of all the buildings had to be drawn up and Marty Howden found it somewhere in the Letchworth archives.

The only other Hamlin CCC buildings that I know for sure to still exist are on the west end of Lake Shore Drive in Oak Orchard near the Black North Inn. There, one section of a barracks has been turned into a cottage and another section of a barracks is serving as a backyard shed for the cottage. Wow! It was called the "The Planting Plan" for the CCC camp and is the closest thing to a survey map of camp that has been found to date. I laminated "The Planting Plan" and, as work at the site continued, I drew in all new discoveries.



After the discovery of the CCC flagpole site[10], It didn't take the regular volunteers long (all five of us) to erect a flagpole of our own on the cement base, over the stump of the original flagpole. And it didn't take long for the main focus of the brush clearing to be slightly re-directed. My wife, Sue, became determined to clear a line of sight from the Recreation Building straight across the campsite to the Mess Hall now that we knew for sure where the center of the camp was. A jungle of tangled brush lay between the flagpole, and the Mess Hall and the wild grape vines were heavier, longer, stronger and more abundant than at any other location in the camp. But Sue was determined to be able to look through the jungle and see in her mind what the Mess Hall might have looked like.



Good shot of the path Sue ordered to be cleared to the Mess Hall from the Rec Building.

All of the regular volunteers joined in the clearing of a path from the flagpole to the Mess Hall. The trail was cut along a rope that was strung from the flag pole to where the Planting Plan said the Mess Hall should be. All clearing was done close to the rope because the brush was so thick you couldn't see ten feet ahead of where you were headed. The first path was very narrow and

[10] A fire alarm box and a fire siren used to be located near the original flagpole but none of the wiring or hardware has been found so far because we have promised the NYS Department of Historic Preservation that we would do no digging in search of artifacts. We can only "rescue" artifacts that "pop up" during the clearing process. It was very difficult to keep that promise when we saw a note in Mary Smith's collection that says a teacher in the CCC education program, and his class, put together a time capsule. The note says the time capsule is buried "in front of the flagpole." The regular volunteers keep hoping it will "pop up" someday. Along with other things, it's discovery will tell us where the "front" of the flagpole is!

you had to step over many limbs and stumps that loppers wouldn't handle. Then the widening of the path began. Eventually, after weeks of hard work and help from a couple of Kendall Boy Scouts and some freshmen from SUNY Brockport, the entire area in front of the Mess Hall was opened up all the way to the flagpole! Sue was happy!

By that time, work had already begun on clearing the covering over the much deeper than normal dent in the ground where the Mess Hall once stood. The dent was filled to the brim with a huge fallen cherry tree, rotting branches, honeysuckle tangle, sharks teeth on a stick, and biting insect nests you didn't know you walked over until later, when you undressed for bed. The dent in the ground had steep sides that made clearing it even more of a challenge. Rocks of all sizes were everywhere but we only moved a few of them. We knew the rocks were there for a reason. The cement loading dock behind the kitchen was all broken up and scattered about. Dan carefully collected and stacked the pieces in case someone wanted to re-assemble the loading dock sometime in the future.

> I was even happier because one of the college students found the distribution box for the camp's elaborate sewer system under a clump of honeysuckle. It wasn't even noted on the planting plan.

It took many weeks, but the outline of the entire Mess Hall slowly became quite visible. As work went on, an assortment of metal objects and broken dishes showed up on top of the ground. Another discovery was thought to be a sidewalk when it first showed up but a former G.I. visitor to the site who had done a lot of KP in his time recognized the "sidewalk" as part of the kitchen wastewater system that allowed cooking grease to be scraped off and collected. Some more miscellaneous plumbing was uncovered between the "sidewalk" and what used to be the south side of the kitchen.

On the other side of the kitchen there was quite a bit of hardware cloth (very coarse screen) that had been plastered over with cement. When enough of it was raked clear of debris, we were able to figure out that it served as a covering for the ditch under the Mess Hall that carried away the mop water that came through the drain holes in the floor. The cement/wire covering of the ditch began under the kitchen and stopped about ten feet away from the corner of the building where it became an open ditch.



The cleared site standing southeast looking northeast, mess hall site.

When the entire Mess Hall site had been cleared, I strung a clothesline around the entire perimeter of the building on metal

posts I drove into the ground at every twist and turn of the outside wall. I wanted visitors to the site to see just how big the building was. While driving the posts to string the clothesline I discovered that a large mound between the dining room and the kitchen was not dirt. It was the actual pile of coal that fed the two huge cast iron ranges in the kitchen![11]



CCC guy standing at front entrance to the mess hall (middle of the west side). He is looking south. The front door was built according to the blueprint, but this shifted the door from the center of the building. Therefore, the door does not line up directly with the flagpole and rec building but the center of the building is in line. The entrance and front side of the mess hall were changed several times (e.g., what he is standing on wasn't always there).

[11] When giving tours of the site to school kids, I'd tell them about a rock that burns called coal. Then I'd point out the pile of coal outside the kitchen area of the Mess Hall. The kids would all scramble to the pile to get a piece to take home as a souvenir of the trip.

Now our attention was directed towards clearing the sites of the barracks. We started at Barracks #1 because it was closest to the Mess Hall. It wasn't going to be any easier than anything we had accomplished so far, but we had gotten the hang of going about big clearing jobs.

Dan had designed and built a "brush buggy" to haul away everything we cut. The buggy was shaped like the letter "T" and resembled a rickshaw with its two skinny bicycle wheels and extra-long wagon-tongue like handle. It sat high enough to pass over stumps and rocks and could be piled as high with brush as the loader could reach. The rule was, "You load it, you empty it."



Where to empty the buggy was an on-going problem. For quite a while we just made piles that eventually had to be moved again - and again. But shortly after the clearing of the barracks sites began, we had some very special help for one day. A local farmer donated $250 that paid the rent on an industrial sized chipper for one day. The Park wouldn't let us near it but provided two Park employees for the day to feed the machine. Seven or eight volunteers pulled apart several piles of brush that had accumulated and we made one heck of a pile of chips!

Then it was back to work doing things the hard way until another farmer loaned us an old hay wagon he wasn't using at the moment. We'd cut the brush and brush-buggy it to the hay wagon. When the hay wagon was full, Walt would drag it with his big lawn tractor to a brush dump the Park had established north of the CCC camp some time ago. It worked so well; I bought a beat-up hay wagon and gave it to the Friends Of The State Park organization Marty Howden had recently helped to get started. A local auto repair shop donated new (used) tires for it and the Friends put a new deck on it.

The "clearing crew" Dan was a member of had been coming to the site to work with us shortly after we began clearing the camp. They'd give us one Wednesday morning per month - 15 to 20 people each visit - and they brought with them a couple of guys who were certified to operate chain saws on State property.[12] They were still showing up once a month when the clearing of the barracks area began, and they made us

[12] From day one, we were not allowed to use a chain saw for any of the clearing because none of us had taken the State Chain Saw Safety course. After three years of relying on the once a month clearing crew, Dan went out of his way to take the State course. He had to go out of town, stay overnight in a motel, and pay for it all out of his own pocket. When the 2016 Park Manager took over, Dan was prohibited from using his saw at the site even though he had just taken the recertification course and had gotten a perfect score on each task.

many very tall and very long brush piles. But we had to take the piles apart and put them on the hay wagon ourselves.

By then I had also bought a small very used lawn tractor that didn't have a mowing deck. We did a lot of work on it and that old mower became a little work horse. We bought a couple of lawn trailers from Tractor Supply and I donated a homemade flat bed wagon. The little lawn tractor could pull all three of them at once, each piled high with brush. Jay Bailey, the Park Manager after Marty retired, also liked what we were doing and gave us the use of the two garages behind the old farmhouse to keep our equipment and tools in. With the Parks help and blessing, (the Park upgraded the electric service) the long garage became our repair shop. We stored the artifacts found at the site on the second floor of the long garage.

One by one, the barracks sites were cleared, and as we worked from the Mess Hall site to a six-foot-wide path that was cut shortly after we began clearing of the site in 2008. The Park was preparing for a re-survey of the east property line of the site. While scouting out the path the surveyors would be taking, Marty ran across a group of three cement slabs that were identical to the door stoop we had found at the south end of the camp. But these slabs were over three hundred feet from the eastern property line, somewhere south of where the aerial photo on Mary Smith's CCC reunion booklet showed the barracks and pretty close to the latrine. (We didn't have the "Planting Plan" yet.) Marty marked the slabs with an empty Tab pop bottle and noted that a weird shaped white birch stood out from the rest of the tangle.



I was excited about the find and had to see it for myself. My son Jesse and I found it, thanks to the pop bottle and the misshapen white birch tree. But we had to go through one heck of a mess to get to it. We wanted to be able to walk to it easily, so we prepared to cut a six-foot-wide path from the narrow path along the eastern property line to the pop bottle. Jesse started lopping standing on the cement slabs and I started lopping from the property line. We couldn't see each other so every so often I'd ask Jesse to count real loud from one to five. I'd use his voice to make sure we were working towards each other, in a straight line. And it worked!

That was the path we worked towards as we cleared barracks sites, working from the area south of the Mess Hall. Eventually we cleared enough brush to conclude that the three cement slabs marked by the Tab pop bottle were all part of a back door stoop arrangement for Barracks #2. One other barracks had two cement slabs by the back door, but the other three only had one. Barracks #2 also had a large flagstone patio outside the front door. Was Barracks #2 privileged or were the inhabitants of Barracks #2 more resourceful?

Personally, I think the inhabitants of Barracks #2 were more resourceful. I have many editions of the newspaper printed by the men in the CCC camp and the newspapers always liked to mention the barracks that won the trip to Rochester each week to see a sports event and have ice cream on the way home. Most often, it was Barracks #2 that won! Evidence on the ground we cleared seems to show that Barracks #2 was indeed one up on the other barracks as to the appearance of their quarters! True, the ground in front of Barracks #3, #4, and #5 had been bulldozed away for the 1985 reunion so we can't see what kind of a patio they had. But we do have photos of the fronts of each of the barracks and the photo of Barracks #2 is the only one with a big patio. And the patio in the picture matches the one we found.





Looking down the street at the south end of the barracks. Camera looking to the west.

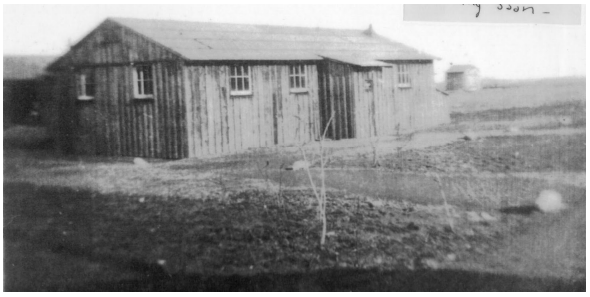
The dents in the ground for each of the barracks were quite visible except for Barracks #2. In 1957, the State Park system drew up plans to turn the entire CCC site into a tree nursery. Marty obtained a plan for the project and let me see it.[13] It called for disruption of the old CCC sewer system and laying pipe for an irrigation system. Large amounts of dirt were moved around, ditches were dug, and tile pipe was busted up. But for some unknown reason, the project was abandoned about six weeks after it was begun.

A huge pile of dirt (about 10 feet high, 20 feet wide and 40 feet long) was left south of Barracks #2's front door patio. And every spring there was a pond on the Education Building site that shouldn't be there. It appeared that the dirt had probably been taken from where the Education Building stood and piled in the Barracks #2 dent in the ground. So, Walt worked a long time with his John Deere yard tractor, moving that dirt back to where it came from. In the process, Walt collected evidence proving

[13] Various Park people have looked for that Plan since 2009, but it seems to have been "misplaced."

that the dirt did in fact come from the Education Building site. He also found lunch bags tossed into the pile of dirt and the pop cans, bread loaf bags, and milk cartons were easily dated to the six-week period the tree nursery project was in operation (1950s). When he was done, the pile of dirt exactly filled the pond shaped hole it was taken from!

While Walt was working on the dirt pile, Sue cleared Barracks #4 and #5 sites by herself. Dan was busy moving VW sized stumps off the barracks site with his gasoline powered winch when he wasn't cleverly taking down dangerous dead trees without using a chain saw. Nick was clearing the cement floor of the latrine.



Latrine to the north of the Barracks. Center of the building is the entrance that is on the south side of the building.

We had to use a steel probe to find it, but the cement floor of the latrine was right where the "Planting Plan" said it should be. A foot of dirt and gravel covered it, and a variety of things were growing in the dirt. Nick tore into the job with a spade, shovel, and an axe - sometimes on his hands and knees. As he worked, all kinds of plumbing appeared, and grass snakes of all sizes crawled out of the drains to watch him work. They were living in the pipes that led to the deep vault where the water came into the latrine. Nick would fling the snakes into the grass, out of his way - every day. As far as he knows, he didn't hurt any of them and after a few weeks, they just went away.

Before long, two parallel cement "curbs" appeared. They were about three feet apart and headed north from the backside of the latrine. They turned out to be the sides of the 20-foot-long toilet pit under the 16-seat privy that was attached to the CCC washroom. The pit was full of all kinds of stuff mixed in with the very fine, very black,



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

very oxidized remains of human excrement. Nick was excited with the find and asked if he could empty the pit!

And he did empty the toilet pit. After a day's work he was covered in black "dust" from head to foot. (His wife told us he was just as black under his clothes when he undressed at home.) During his digging he found a couple bushels of bottles of all kinds - some broken, some not. When a Miller's beer bottle showed up, we were reminded that



we were looking at what the German POWs left behind - not the CCC enrollees.[14]

Nick would carefully sort and save every chip of broken porcelain he found. I was able to glue back together an entire coffee mug and what might have been a drinking fountain from some of the pieces. But the stories about not bothering to retrieve watches, rings and coins that fell into the depths of the outhouse didn't seem to fit this privy. Nick would carefully sift each shovel full of the black "fertilizer" and find screws, bolts, hinges, combs, brush handles, parts of electrical fixtures but nothing of value. No money or jewelry.

Work at the latrine site seemed to refocus the attention of volunteers to the north end of the camp. Somewhere beyond the latrine there were supposed to be nine or so buildings associated with tools and trucks, their storage and repair, a sawmill, fuel storage buildings, and a dynamite shack.

All of the buildings north of the latrine, except the sawmill, were removed from the camp before turning the CCC camp into a POW camp.

The long 13-bay Department of Interior truck garage was easy to locate. The "Planting Plan" said it was 50-feet from the back door of the latrine toilet wing - across a 50-foot-wide heavy duty gravel road - and I sent Sue crawling on all fours through the thick brush dragging the end of a tape measure. The plan was for her to stick a wire flag in the ground where the front of the garage should be. But the flag wouldn't go into the ground. She made several stabs and finally shouted that there was cement everywhere. I hollered back that there couldn't be. "The garage floors were all gravel." She yelled, "They're all cement now," dropped the flag and crawled back.

We chopped a path through the brush to the garage site and sure enough, there was cement everywhere. Another job for Nick! Weeks later I had fun telling Mary Smith about the newly discovered, unpublished, historical update of the Hamlin CCC camp.

Very shortly after the POWs took over the CCC camp in 1944, the latrine burned to the ground. Probably because the coal-fired boiler that provided the hot water for the showers was suddenly overworked. The boiler was built with 200 CCC enrollees in mind - not 400 German POWs.

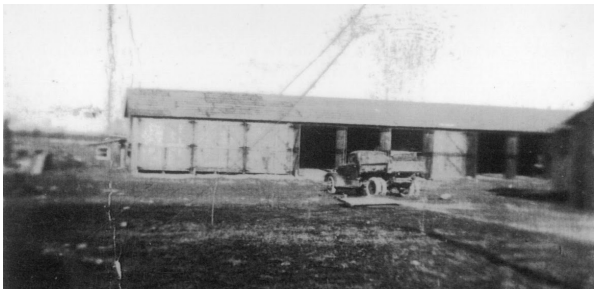
Work was begun immediately on rebuilding the latrine. At the same time, a second washroom was quickly designed and built on the gravel floors of the western half of the 13-bay garage. The packed gravel floors of the garage bays were perfect for pouring cement over after laying out the appropriate

[14] The POWs saved cologne, hair tonic, and medicine bottles to carry homemade booze with them when they went to work in the fields. Some of these bottles were stored in the rafters of the barracks. When the camp prepared for closing in January of 1946, a few (perhaps 12) German POWs volunteered to stay behind and help clean out the buildings. When the bottles were found during cleanup, they were tossed into the latrine. Sometime after 1946 the privy was bulldozed from sight.

plumbing. And the water line into the camp from the north ran under the garage bay where the new washroom began. How convenient! When finished, the new facility included two shower rooms, more sinks, and laundry tubs with wringers.

When Nick got everything shoveled off, it was also obvious that someone, for some reason, had busted up parts of the POW washroom floor sometime after the camp was dismantled.[15] We also found that the two middle bays of the 13-bay garage did have cement floors and that cement began where the new POW washroom left off. That cement was not busted up, but trees were growing in the catch basin that served the two special garage bays.

Dan went to work and put the busted up floor back together. It was like a jigsaw puzzle, but there was only one piece missing. At the same time, all of the piping that had been bent and pulled out of place was put back where it belonged. Then Dan took down the trees that had taken over the catch basin (without using a chain saw) and built an elaborate cover for it that looks like a doghouse (out of treated lumber) so that deer wouldn't fall into the catch basin and get hurt.



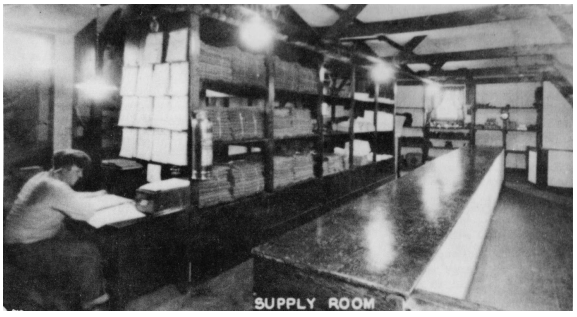
The south side of the 13-bay garage. The camera is looking north. Gravel floor except the two bays in the middle.

[15] In the recent past, extra building materials dragged there from the Park were stored on the cement. I saw some of the "stuff" when the oil drums were being removed from the site. Nick removed a stack of cement guard rails while he was clearing the floor.

What we learned when we uncovered the remains of the 120-foot-long Department of Interior Garage (sometimes called the Park Garage) was pretty much original research. And from here on, we would come across a lot more original research.

Until we started to uncover the CCC campsite in 2008, Mary Smith had all the available information about the site. Other than some photos, most of her information were transcripts of interviews she had conducted with former CCC enrollees or support staff. The people she interviewed concentrated mostly on life in the camp and not so much about the construction of the buildings.

Before the 1985 reunion Mary interviewed a "Sergeant Shanley" who was an enlistee who eventually was given a leadership position as head of the supply building.



Sergeant Shanley is sitting at the desk in the Supply Building, first building on the west end of street #2, camera is pointing down the aisle to the south end of the building.

Shanley and Mary sat down and labeled a blank drawing of the CCC camp as he remembered it - as he lived it over 40 years before. The result was the last word about what was where until the actual site was finally cleared.

As it turned out, Sergeant Shanley's labeling was right on for the south end of the camp (where his duties kept him most of the time), but he was a little off on some things at the north end of the camp. For one thing, he had the entire back half of the Department of Interior Garage labeled as "Blacksmith Shop." The bays of the garage were only 26-feet-deep. With a truck parked inside, there was no room left for any kind of shop!

But no one else had any better information about the Blacksmith Shop. There were photos of it in Mary's collection that proved that it was NOT part of the long garage, but no one had any idea as to where "the shop" was located within the camp.

In the Sergeant's defense, we did find a pile of strange, rounded firebrick piled at the garage site. It was neatly stacked in the corner of what was the last bay on the east end of the garage, along with some iron slag. The son of the actual CCC blacksmith of yore told us (when he toured the site) that he believed the slag and firebrick were from a temporary kiln that had been set up. Perhaps for some special, on-site casting of a truck part! If Sergeant Shanley just happened to pass by that garage about 75 years ago and got a peek at what was going on, he might have incorrectly assumed that he was looking at a part of the Blacksmith Shop.

The mystery of just where the Blacksmith Shop was located was finally solved two years ago. A packet of photos taken by a former Hamlin CCC camp enrollee had been loaned to me so that I could copy them. Several of the photos showed views of the

buildings at the north end of camp that I had never seen from that angle before.

One particular photo drove me nuts. I just couldn't place it in the camp. When I finally



figured it out, several things about the north end of the camp suddenly came together! The rock crusher, the Blacksmith Shop, the sawmill and the tool repair building were all in the same picture once you placed your head at the spot on the ground where the photographer was standing when he took the picture! But I have to tell you about the clearing of the rest of the camp's north end before that photo will make sense to you.



CCC guy, oil storage building pictured over his right shoulder. The building on the right is the Tool House. The vehicle is on the 50-foot-wide road. Camera is facing northeast. Oil storage building is on the northeast corner where the 50-foot-wide road meets the west entrance road from Moscow Road, just before it loops around.



Picture taken from the top of the rock crusher looking to the southeast. The rock crusher is in the looped end of the western entrance road from Moscow Road (behind the oil storage building). The building front left is the blacksmith shop. The center building is the tool repair wing (facing the blacksmith shop) and the tool storage building running right to left in picture. Over the roof of the center building are the barracks. On the left side of the picture is the west end of the 13-bay garage and the latrine. The wood shown on the right side of the picture are the beams used in the construction of the buildings at Hamlin Beach State Park brought over from the sawmill for the trucks to pick up and move to the Park.

After all the fun we had at the Park Garage site, we were hoping that something would show up that was once part of the Army Garage. The garage didn't have a wooden floor so there was no dent in the ground to mark its location. None of the five bays had a cement floor and the corner posts were not set in cement. No one ever mentioned it in the interviews that have been saved, but it does show up in old photos. All we knew for sure about it was that it was much shorter than the "Park Garage" (24'x60').



Jerry Kaczov, CCC Graduate, Rear of Army Garage, (he is looking south) The Army Garage is a 5-bay garage to the east of the 13-bay garage on the north side of the 50-wide road.

It is thanks to the Planting Plan entirely that we were able to stake out the Army Garage site. It was all done by measurements once the ground was cleared. But as we were pounding in the posts marking the outline of the building we did come across an interesting artifact. Ending exactly where the back wall of the Army Garage began was a little dump. All kinds of very rusted cans and broken bottles were sticking up through dirt. You could feel and hear the crunching when you walked on them. It appears that trash was conveniently tossed out a back window of the garage.[16]

The Army's Oil Storage Building about 30-feet from the eastern property line was a little more interesting and its location could even be found without the Planting Plan. The 8'x16' cement floor gave it away. The floor was cracked here and there but stumps of some of the wooden framing were still stuck where the cement was poured around them.[17] (Truck fuel and motor oil were probably stored here in 50-gallon drums.)

The only photos we have of the Army Oil Storage Building show it as a tiny, far away structure in the background of photos taken of other buildings in the camp. So, as we cleared the actual site, it was exciting to find something that wouldn't have showed up in a close-up photo anyway. In the ground a

[16] At the risk of stereotyping the Army crew at the camp, this was the only on-site dump we found in the eight acres we cleared. It also is interesting to note that the little dump was not disturbed by the many German POWs who must have walked there (this area was within the POW barbed wire fence).

[17] The guy who helped us find the buried POW camp barbed wire (with Park permission) waved his metal detector over the cement floor, just for the heck of it. His metal detector told him there was a gold coin under one of the cement sections and he wanted very much to go after it! For the record, If there was a coin there, I can assure you it is still there!

short distance away from the west side of the little building was a circle of flat stones, six inches across and larger, stuck in the ground on edge. The flat stones were overlapped like roof shingles and formed a dam to impede the flow of whatever might spill inside the storage building. Clever!

Clearing the rest of the area around the Army Oil Storage building and to the north was extremely hard going. The ground was very uneven with huge, exposed roots, odd-shaped stumps and clumps of half-dead wild cherry trees. Lumps of coal were scattered everywhere! (?)

Eventually, a little "hill" caught our attention, and it turned out to be the site of what Sergeant Shanley labeled "Coal Storage Area" on his 1980s map. (But he didn't have it drawn this close to the Army Garage and Oil Storage Building.) The little hill was a pile of coal a few feet high, and it covered an area of about 100 square feet. For some reason, the coal was not salvaged when the camp closed over 70 years ago, and it had not been set afire! Amazing! The mound of coal was on the "secret" trail through the brush fishermen took to Howden Pond before we began clearing the CCC site. One tossed lit cigarette would have done the job![18]

The other CCC oil storage building - labeled the "Department of Interior Oil Storage Building" on Shanley's 1980s map of the camp - used to stand 30 feet from the western property line and looked a little different. A close-up photo of it doesn't appear to show an oil spill dam. Unfortunately, we are never going to know for sure because there is now a wide, deep ditch where that 8x24 foot building and a gas pump used to sit.



View of Howden Pond.

[18] Very few people in Hamlin even knew that there was a pond there before we opened up that area. The pond was dug when the Lake Ontario State Parkway was being built in the 1970s but it has no access. Fishermen used to "sneak" to the site after hiding their cars in the bushes behind the Park's brush dump.

From time to time the regular volunteers working at the CCC camp would put in some time working at Howden Pond. They were the ones who opened the path to the pond from the CCC camp in the first place and they cleared a large area along the shore for visitors and fishermen to picnic. Dan even furnished three picnic tables he built from pieces he salvaged from the Park's picnic table dump.

One day, on the way back from the pond to continue work on the CCC camp, Sue asked me if there was anything she could do. Not having anything particular on my mind at the time, I hastily pointed to an extremely dense thicket only a deer could get through near the entrance to Howden Pond and said, "Supposedly, there used to be a sawmill somewhere in there. You might want to try your luck at finding something left from it."



Al Chike rolling logs into the CCC sawmill.

Off she went and I headed to where we guys were working around the camp's main septic tank - a cement block lined hole in the ground 20x20x8 feet deep. Not more than 15 minutes later, Sue showed up and said, "I found it!" I couldn't believe it and the whole gang followed Sue to where she had discovered the large cement structure that once held in place the four-foot in diameter saw blade.

The approach to the sawmill area Sue led us over had been extensively torn up during the six weeks or so in the 1950s when the Park threatened to turn the camp into a tree nursery. That's why we had saved checking out that area until last. Large amounts of dirt had been removed from the area in front of the building and was piled high behind the Park's brush dump. A deep ditch that started in the middle of nothing and went nowhere important cut across the entire length and a few feet away from where the front of the sawmill used to be. The cement structure Sue found looked like it had been stripped of all metal parts by vandals on a rampage searching for scrap metal. The mechanisms were not dismantled - they were broken off. Much of its base had been buried in dirt. Nick and his shovel went to work the next day.

When Nick got down to the floor of the structure, it ended up looking a lot like the



altar in some ancient temple of worship. He found all kinds of scrap metal and had neatly placed the collection on top of the structure. And thanks to Nick, you could now see where repairs had been made to the structure. When the sawmill was working, chunks of wood would sometimes get wedged behind the blade and put deep

gouges in the cement. Periodically, fresh cement had to be troweled over the gouges. Nick actually found a half bag of the hardened, unused cement mix used to plaster over those gouges (minus the paper bag). One of his best finds was the head gasket of the four-cylinder gasoline engine that powered the sawmill.

Fortunately, I had been given a tour of the working sawmill at Letchworth State Park a couple of years before our find. Consequently, I was quite sure that parts of the Hamlin CCC sawmill were a close match, and I was able to recognize a cement "kind of post" near where Nick worked as being a floor support. The Letchworth tour also told me that high ground behind and to the side of our cement saw blade support was to allow saw dust to be augured out of the building through a passageway under the sawmill floor. But the Letchworth tour did not help me determine exactly where the corners of the building might have been. The sawmill wasn't on the "Planting Plan" and I didn't have enough information to draw it in.

I measured the distance from the Army Garage to the cement support, but I had no way of knowing how far the support was from the front or side wall of the sawmill. I had a clue though. I had found an elusive survey medallion for some Monroe County workers by recognizing a tiny patch of CCC cement floor on their satellite photo. They awarded me the satellite photo and I found out later that the medallion was "about 207 feet from the NW corner of the sawmill." But I couldn't make the measurement because the Park's enormous brush dump was in the way. A local surveyor couldn't help either because the tall trees kept him from connecting with enough satellites.

Eventually I zeroed in on the location of the sawmill with the help of an enlargement of the aerial photo of the camp taken by a local farmer shortly after the camp closed. When a ruler was laid on the photo, the east wall of the sawmill was on the same line as the



Jacobs Aerial, Hamlin CCC Camp about 1942-43 (after the camp closed) thought to be taken as part of the application to have the POW camp located here.

east wall of the Army Officer's Quarters, the east wall of Barracks #1, and the center of the Army garage! That gave me a very close approximation of the east/west location of the sawmill.

A few months ago, I figured out mathematically (using graph paper) how to come within a couple of feet of locating the front wall of the sawmill. About the same time, Dan and Nick climbed over the brush dump and made me an arc of plastic posts, all 207 feet from the medallion. It was suddenly possible to accurately place the corner posts of the 76x36 foot sawmill in the ground!

Dan and Nick have cleared the sawmill site three times since its discovery. Dan even went so far as to clear a wide path to the north, well beyond the sawmill. To his surprise he kept finding wine bottles sticking out of the ground. The area was not part of the CCC camp, and his path was not on the way to Howden Pond. The finding of a CCC enlistee's diary solved the mystery.

Dan's path was part of the route taken by CCC guys, after the workday, to swim at the future State Park they were helping to build. (There was a pond along the route and in the winter, they liked to skate on it.) It was against the rules but some of the young men used to buy wine at Barber's Bar and Grill in Brockport and bring it back to camp. But they didn't drink it in camp - they went north of the sawmill, on Dan's path, and had their party there. Dan was finding the empties![19]

[19] Park Manager Jay Bailey asked Dan to stop work on his path north of the sawmill because he was getting into the wetland area along Yanty Creek and that would require a paperwork hassle we didn't need.

The last section of the CCC camp we still had to clear was the NW corner. The Tool House was located there along with the Tool Repair building. We had already crossed the other Oil Storage building off our list of things to look for because of drastic alterations of the ground there, but the location of the Blacksmith Shop was still a mystery and we'd keep an eye open for it.

The "Planting Plan" told us where the southernmost corners of the tool house were, but a huge pile of Medina sandstone covered one of them. And on top of the sandstone was a nasty clump of vines, young trees, and scraggly brush. Two Boy Scouts cleared the brush away and the sandstone was carted away a little at a time.

The other corner of the Tool House was piled high with enormous logs all the way back to the sandstone. Jay Bailey got us some Park help with the hippopotamus size logs, but Dan rolled away the others with a peavey. The newly exposed cement floor showed that an L-shaped building with a couple of little additions had sat there. And this is where the accuracy of the "Planting Plan" fell apart!

The "Planting Plan" represented the Tool House as a rectangle 60x22 feet. The long part of the cement floor L we found measured 60x26, close to the Planting Plan rectangle. The HISTORICAL RECORD OF CCC BUILDINGS for Hamlin (I got a copy from Washington, D.C.) listed a 60x26 Tool House - a match - but there was nothing on the official list to account for the short part of the L. Sergeant Shanley did not have a monopoly on misinformation about the north end of the Hamlin CCC camp!

I tried to make a case for the short part of the L being the elusive Blacksmith Shop. But the HISTORICAL RECORD listed the Hamlin Blacksmith Shop as being 28x20 feet. The short part of the L measured 40x20 feet.

Eventually I came by another inventory of Hamlin CCC buildings and it mentioned the Hamlin camp as having a "Tool Repair Building." The short part of the L had to be it! I was sure of it after a 91-year-old CCC enlistee who had lived in the camp toured the site with his family. He recognized the stains on the cement floor in question as oil drippings from wood turning lathes. During his free time, he was allowed to use the lathes to make parts for his model building hobby.



The four camp features in one photo mentioned earlier clinched it.[20] If I had a camera in my hand standing near the NW corner of the short part of the L, and if I aimed the camera to the NE, I would get a picture of the corner of the Tool Repair Building on the right, the sawmill in the distance straight ahead, and the Blacksmith shop to my left. If a car was sitting in front of the Blacksmith Shop while I was taking the picture, its rear window would pick up the reflection of the rock crusher which would be behind me, over my left shoulder! Other little mysteries and

[20] Today, that photo is on the interpretive sign next to the L-shaped cement floor at the site.

misinterpretations were cleared up with the clearing of the NW corner of the camp. For starters, we were able to finally stake out the Chlorination House that was behind the 13-bay garage, a little to the west of the 20x20x8 foot deep septic tank (the septic tank that was the end of the long sewer system that began 50 feet in front of the Infirmary).[21] The top of the septic tank appears to have been left open so that chemicals could easily be dumped into it - the chemicals stored in the Chlorination House. An old aerial photo shows it as a building no taller than a modern backyard shed. The HISTORICAL RECORD lists it as being 6x6 feet and the "Planting Plan" correctly locates it.

Shanley's 1980s map doesn't show it, but the HISTORICAL RECORD lists a 26x60 foot "Utility Building." It was finally recognized in an old photo of the sawmill. It stood north of the Blacksmith Shop and the chances of finding any evidence of it are nil. Park activity over the past 50 years has obliterated that area. That same sawmill photo also shows a 24x16 foot building that was made to be mobile. It was moved to wherever it was needed. One of the HISTORICAL RECORD updates calls it the "Cabinet Shop" but in the old 1939 photo of the sawmill, it was being used by the stone cutters. In another photo looking to the west, down the heavy duty 50-foot-wide road in front of the two garages, the Cabinet Shop is seen sitting on the south side of the road not far from the Education Building.



Looking to the west down the 50-foot-wide road built for heavy truck traffic. It runs north of the barracks and south of the 13-bay garage (to the right in the picture). The latrine is shown in the left side of the picture behind the truck. The small building in the center of the picture is the only building built to be moved. It was placed near the Education building, moved north of the 13-bay garage and then moved back near the Education building, later to become the POW Guard washroom.

That would have been the end of the story about the Cabinet Shop had it not been for a happy accident while the finishing touches were being applied to the entire NW corner of the CCC camp. Nick, Dan and Walt had turned the Medina sandstone heaps left over from the 1973 storms into a massive, very impressive wall along the western property line. Dan had already spent one entire year single handedly salvaging all he could from the Park's mountain of discarded picnic tables. In the process he made a smaller mountain of useless scraps and had hidden the mess from view behind a wall of picnic tabletops. College students had just tossed all of that debris - tabletop curtain and all - into dumpsters provided by Jay Bailey just before he left Hamlin. During the final raking of the area flattened out by the

[21] Nick did not shovel out this septic tank. We only opened up two corners - one to determine how deep it was and the other to expose the pipe that sent the treated water to leach fields that are now buried under the Park's brush dump. That pipe is still open and every spring when that area floods, that pipe drains the entire area.

dumpsters, to make a small parking lot for our own use, some old cement showed up right where the Cabinet Shop sat in the photo of the 50-foot-wide road! Of course, Nick and his shovel went to work on it right away.

The cement turned out to be the floor of a building. About half of the floor had been bulldozed away in the recent past but, fortunately, a large tree prevented the bulldozer operator from getting it all. From what was left we could see that the little portable building that sat there - the Cabinet Shop - had been turned into a kind of "locker room" that has become the link between my story of the Hamlin CCC camp and my story of the Hamlin Prisoner of War Camp.

The hastily prepared locker room we had just found had shower stall and toilet plumbing in the cement. For expediency, it appears that the 2x4 base plates for the inside partitions also served as forms for the wet cement. Also, please note: There is no permanent building with plumbing in that area in any of the photos of the CCC camp or on any of the maps or in any of the inventories of the CCC camp. No CCC interview in anyone's collection ever mentioned a permanent building in that area. Obviously, that locker room was built when the POW camp was built.

And suddenly other things finally made sense. Where were the 40 to 50 guards for the POW camp quartered? There were only six buildings outside the barbed wire fence. Only two of these were suited to house guards - but not 50. The Infirmary had another use, the Commandant's Office was out, and the supply room only had room for a couple of cots among all the counters and shelves. That left the Education Building.

When the CCC camp first opened, a little over half of Barracks #3 was set aside for Roosevelt's required classrooms. But Hamlin's education program was much more successful than many of the programs at other CCC camps (probably because of the college and a top-notch high school in Brockport). The program quickly grew out of the makeshift classrooms in the barracks and a building only 30 feet shorter than a barracks was built to handle the classes. Very soon, that was not enough, and two wings (20x25 each) were built off the back of that 80-foot-long building.

When the camp became a prisoner of war camp, the Education Building was quite suited for being turned into a dormitory. It was very large, uncluttered, and close to the barbed wire fence. The fact that it had no plumbing was easily remedied with the help of the Cabinet Shop which just happened to be parked nearby! And the problem of providing a toilet facility for the guards who manned the gun towers at the north end of the camp was solved at the same time.



Inside of the south wing (running east-west from the south end of the building) of the Education building. Camera is facing east. Door in center of the picture goes into the north-south section of the building.

The Education Building isn't given much attention when the subject of Hamlin's CCC camp comes up and it would have helped if we had been able to uncover remnants of the Education Building like we did for the other buildings. But that was not to be. As mentioned earlier, the aborted conversion of the old CCC camp to a tree nursery in 1956 created a large pond that appeared every spring where the Education Building used to sit. When Walt returned the missing dirt to the site, he also brought back a bottle of India Ink (it still had ink in it) and a piece of a slate blackboard.

The only other remnant of the Education Building is the patio-like landing in front of one of the two identical front doors of the building. An old photo of the building shows one of those landings, but it is not the one you can see on the ground at the site. The one in the photo must have been carted away when the building site was dug up. The remaining patio stone landing did make it possible for us to put down a Medina sandstone marker where the other one used to be.

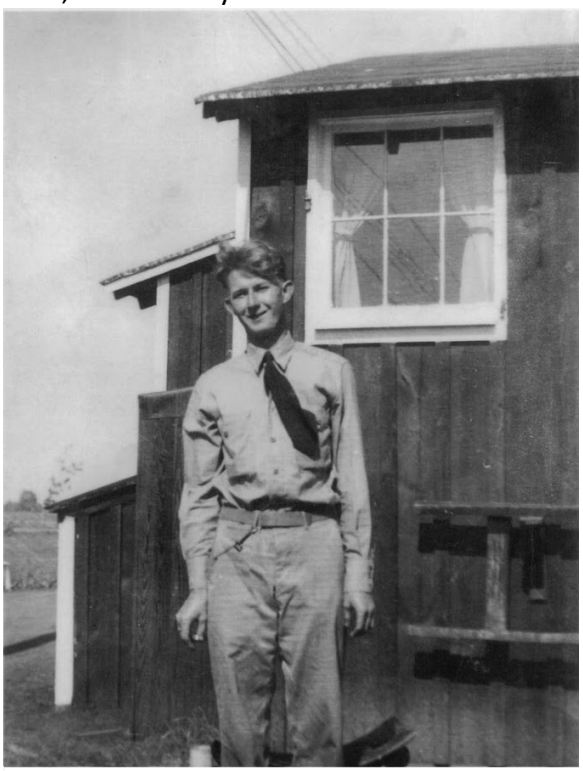
And finally, there is a very interesting photo in Mary Smith's collection that was said to have been taken of

a classroom inside the Hamlin CCC Education Building. But it defied all of my attempts to correctly place it on a floor plan of the building. There were shadows in the picture that could only be made if sunlight was entering the room from both the right and the left at the same time!

When the one remaining patio stone landing finally made it possible to stake out the perimeter of the entire structure, the shadows in the picture suddenly made sense. The left and right shadows ended up proving that the classroom was in the southernmost of the two wings added to the building in 1939. Sunlight was reflected off the building wing to the north and into the windows of the southern wing whenever sunlight was entering the room from the south to give the strange effect captured by the photo!

Six of the Hamlin CCC Camp's "Graduates"

Al Chike and I were friends for many years and other than my great grandfather Lester Oatman, he was one of the first CCC enrollees I ever met. But I didn't know that until Al passed away. He might have told me he worked in our CCC camp when we had occasion to chat, but if he did, it obviously went in one ear and out the other. Mary Smith had not yet turned me on to the Hamlin CCC site. When I did finally get started working on reclaiming Hamlin's CCC camp, Al was gone, and I sure could have used his help!



Al Chike standing at the rear of Barracks #5, back entrance and coal bins on the left side of the photo.

Al was a very popular Town of Hamlin volunteer. He helped everybody, especially the ladies of the fire department during the yearly carnival. Al could always be found near their food booth sitting behind a card table selling several different sets of raffle tickets.

After Al died, his daughter and son-in-law had heard about my work at the CCC site and gave me the few photos Al kept from his Hamlin CCC adventure. They told me that Al never said much about his CCC experiences, but they did have one story they thought I might be interested in.

I have no way to "fact check it," but I have many reasons to believe that it is 100% true.

Al lived nearby (in Albion, as I recall) and after signing up for the CCC, Al was sent to the Hamlin camp. He fit right into the program here and his mother quickly put her $25 per month share of his earnings to good use. But at the end of six months the rules said Al had to leave the CCC to make room for another needy young man[1] - just when Al was enjoying himself and his mother was getting used to the extra money!

According to family legend, Al's mother wrote a note and sent Al to register at one of the Letchworth CCC camps. The note said, "Please accept my son's application to join the CCC. Be advised that this Albert 'S' Chike is not the other Al Chike."

It worked! Al and his mother were in the CCC for another six months. However, a couple

[1] The short six-month enlistments were a problem nationwide. Shortly after Al's experience, the CCC administration extended the enlistments to 12 months. Not long after that, they extended them again. Before the CCC program was discontinued, enlistees could stay in for two years.

of weeks later, Al and a bunch of other young men were transferred….to the Hamlin CCC camp! Many years later, Al told his daughter that he was extremely nervous about walking back into the Hamlin camp but said that they just "kind of ignored me and assigned me to a barracks."

I have always had full access to Mary Smith's photo collection, but the photos Al's family passed on to me were the start of my own collection. I think the photos were taken during his second tour of duty in the Hamlin camp and they have contributed greatly to my education about the Hamlin CCC camp. One of Al's photos shows him after exiting the Recreation Building by the south door. He has a towel across his shoulders, something in his hands, and he looks like he is on the way to the shower room. (But the shower room was a long way off in the opposite direction.) He is standing in the middle of what we call Second Street - the street that passes in front of the five CCC administration buildings. Behind Al is the big barn[2] associated with the old 968 Moscow Road farmhouse.



It is that photo that told us where to start clearing Second Street! At that time, we didn't know for sure where anything in the camp was, but Al got us off to a real good start. In the photo, the little window under the peak of the barn was directly over Al's right shoulder. Because the barn was still there, I simply walked over and measured the distance from a spot on the ground under the window at the peak of the barn roof, to the edge of Moscow Road. Then I measured that same distance from Moscow Road down the entrance road into the camp and we started lopping! As we worked, we uncovered the large rocks and other things shown in Al's photo.

Another of Al's photos is used every time I give a tour of the site. In the photo, Al (on the left) and four of his friends are posing in front of Barracks #5 on Third Street, the street that goes by all of the barracks. The guys are standing and kneeling to the left of the photo and behind them, in the background on the right side of the photo, is the Mess Hall.



Before each tour, I put five wire flags in the ground where Al and his friends gathered as they posed over 70 years ago. When the

[2] The CCC used the barn in the winter to cut stone for drinking fountains and fireplaces. The Park didn't order the barn taken down until 2009.

tour begins, I take the tourists to where the cameraman was most likely standing when the picture was snapped and hold up an enlargement of Al's photo for all to see. I tell them to look at the flags in the ground and "mental in" the line of barracks that are no longer there. Then I tell them to "mental in" the Mess Hall "way back there" - and I point out the spot with my arm. Then I let the enlarged photo circulate amongst the tourists. There is always much chatter and some oohs and ahhs as they mentally take the site before them back in time.

I use a set of other old photos similarly around the rest of the tour.

Al also contributed the only known photo of something going on at the sawmill. We had a photo of the front of the sawmill from a distance, but Al left us a photo of him rolling logs through an opening in the side of the sawmill using a peavey. His photo was instrumental in our figuring out the layout of the sawmill after we found the cement structure that held the four-foot saw blade. It is only fitting that Al will be forever remembered by that photo because it is displayed on the interpretive sign in front of the sawmill site.





CCC participants, Al Chike is on the left in the second row.



CCC Group in front of the south side of Barracks V. Al Chike is fourth from the left in the front row.

George Weissinger attended an afternoon CCC presentation I was giving at the Sweden Senior Center in Brockport a few years ago. George sat somewhere near the middle of the audience and Park Manager Jay Bailey was at the back of the room videotaping everything I said and put up on the screen. About halfway through my program George jumped up and turned around to face the camera. He raised his cane high in the air and shouted, "I'm here to tell you that the best six months of my life were the six months I spent in Hamlin's CCC camp." Then he sat down to enjoy the rest of my presentation.

Right after I finished talking I rushed over to George and asked if I could visit him where he lived and ask him questions about his Hamlin CCC experience. George obliged and the next day I got to sit with him at his kitchen table in his apartment. I brought along some enlargements of photos Mary Smith and I had of the camp to see if he could tell us something we didn't know about them. He reacted immediately to a picture of a few CCC guys lolling around on the cots in what we thought might be Barracks #4.



"That's me," he almost shouted. "And that's so and so, and so and so. That's the barracks bully lying there." He pointed to the fellow at the bottom right looking into the camera.



Barracks #4, left to right: ?, ?, Sackel (laying down), George, Al Chike, ?, ?, Ronnie Ware (laying down), Drew, Hartman.

George told me that he might very well have been the shortest guy in the barracks, but he had grown up in downtown Rochester in the pool halls. He said he had learned to handle himself quite nicely in any situation. When he introduced himself to the guys in the barracks the day he arrived in camp, he was warned about the "barracks bully." George said, "You want me to take care of him?"

> George told me not to tell anyone but the first thing he did when he went into a new pool hall was to scout out the location of a back window, just in case!

"Can you?" they asked.

Sure enough, when the bully made his appearance, it didn't take him long to start picking on George, the new guy from the city. But the show didn't last long. George had him on the floor crawling out from under a

cot in nothing flat. From that day forward, Barracks #4 had no bully!

George loaned me his Hamlin CCC photo collection so that I could copy them - photos of him and his newfound friends who also worked with the trucks in the Department of Interior's garage. You can tell by the photos that he really did enjoy his six months there and his buddies appeared to enjoy George's being there.

The strange part is that George, like Al Chike, never told any of his family about the CCC experience. I was being told things his granddaughter was thrilled to hear when I got around to passing them on to her and her family. It was beginning to look like the CCC guys all appreciated what the program did for them and their families, but it was not something they talked about. The CCC was not even mentioned in his obituary.

This nagged at me with every CCC enlistee I learned about. Was it just something they were expected to do because of the times? They seemed to treat any fun they had as something that was not part of the program. But every CCC enlistee I got to talk to told me they were very proud of what they accomplished. It was not like boy scout camp where you were expected to have stories to tell to prove that you had gotten your money's worth. It was almost like they felt afraid to admit that they had fun while being on welfare.

Don Mannara was 91 years old when he was "dragged to the CCC site" by members of his family so that I could give him a tour of the Hamlin CCC. It was late in the year but there was no snow on the ground. Everyone was bundled up and Don complained the moment he got out of the car that he didn't understand why they brought him out here. Everyone heard him say at least once, "It was so long ago I can't remember anything about being here."

But the tour began as they usually do. I gave my history of the CCC spiel and showed everyone the photo of Al Chike and friends when we stopped in front of the five wire flags.

Don listened but didn't have a thing to say. Then we passed by the front of the Recreation Building which was outlined in clothesline and I showed the tourists a couple of old photos - one of the outside of the building and one of the stage on the inside of the building.



As we rounded the SE corner of the roped in Recreation Building, I heard Don actually gasp. "I can't believe it's still there," and he stopped dead in his tracks. Everyone else had wandered ahead.

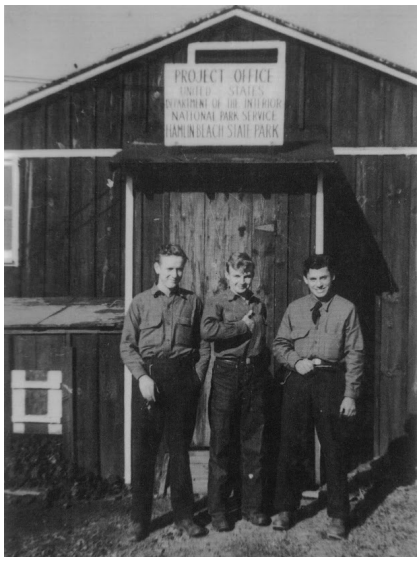
Don stood staring at a flagstone walkway that started just outside the back door of the Recreation Building (the door at the rear of the stage - behind the sofa in the old photo) and ended at Second Street. Every flat stone was still in place - just as they were when Nick scraped the six inches of dirt off them. The walkway was expertly laid out and had survived over 70 winters. It gracefully fanned out when it reached Second Street and no one had trouble seeing exactly where the walkway ended and Second Street began.

Don just kept staring at it. I went back to where he was standing and yelled for everyone to come on over to the walkway. I announced that Don was about to take his first walk, in over 70 years, down an old familiar sidewalk.



The crowd gathered, the cameras came out, and Don strutted down the walkway, beaming from ear to ear. There was even some applause. After that, Don had something to say at every stop on the tour!

Two stops later he had something to say about a photo I held up of the CCC Project Office. Three CCC enlistees were shown standing in front of the little building and the guy in the middle had a proud grin on his face and one hand was stuck inside his shirt like a little Napoleon. The guy didn't look a day over 13-years-old and I reminded everybody that you had to be 17-years-old to get in the CCC.[3] Don spoke up and told everyone that there were "kids" like him in all of the barracks. But nobody said anything. Don said there were a couple of underage boys in his barracks.



By the time the tour got to the north end of the camp, Don had told us that when he joined the CCC, he had three brothers in the navy and five brothers and two sisters at home. To help make ends meet, he delivered home grown veggies in his car. We heard about his early assignments at Letchworth, Arkport, and West Almond, before ending up in Hamlin for a second tour of duty.

When the tour got to the 13-bay garage Don was telling us he learned to drive truck driving for the CCC. He remembered hauling logs from Letchworth to the Hamlin sawmill, Medina sandstone from the quarries, and delivering stone fresh from the Hamlin CCC rock crusher to the park site. All of this from a guy who was heard earlier complaining that he couldn't remember anything about being in the Hamlin camp!

Near the end of the tour, we gathered on the cement floor at the NW corner of the camp. Don began telling us about how he enlisted in the Navy when the war started and how the CCC helped him prepare for it. But as we stood there, Don had another memory flash! He looked down and pointed to what he excitedly identified as oil stains. "I used to come here after work, and they would let me use the lathes to work on my model collection. That's the oil that was always dripping from the machines," he told us.

Until that moment, we had been trying to convince ourselves that the Blacksmith Shop must have sat here. Don's revelation got my brain working. Lathes in a blacksmith shop? Not hardly! This must be where they made replacement wheelbarrow handles, axe handles, shovel handles, and pickaxe handles from ash trees that grew all over the area! This must have been the Tool Repair Shop!

And now you know the whole story of what led up to an earlier mention of this event.

[3] In some cases, a needy mother of a family with a 13-year-old son might live next door to a family that DID have a healthy 17-year-old young man. In desperation, the needy mother would write a letter to the CCC Board asking them to give her son special consideration because they couldn't find his birth certificate. "It had been lost in a fire," or something similar. The letter might also say "He looks young for his age just like his father always did," or something to that effect. In such cases, the CCC Board often just looked the other way.

Then everyone headed for their cars. Many of the younger folks looked a little pooped. But not Don. He was stepping along like someone half his age. Don had had a wonderful time. In fact, he came back to the site two more times with friends he himself got turned on to the history of the place. Like many other CCC graduates, after 70 years he finally realized that he had been part of something that was really extraordinary - something that showed what this country could do when the chips were down.

After his last visit to the site, when he was about to get into the car that brought him, Don turned around and scurried back across the Recreation Hall site and stopped in front of the flagpole. He put legs together, stood up straight, and saluted the flag. Then, smiling proudly, the now 92-year-old guy hurried back to the car. He died a few months later.



1Don Mannara (CCC camp graduate), his son, neighbor and Ed during Don's first tour.



George Lake was another one of those young men who lived the CCC experience but didn't talk much about it. It was just something that had to be done and that was it. He simply did what he had to do. No "thanks" were necessary!

But after word got out about the clearing going on at the Hamlin CCC camp, many people got to thinking differently about the CCC program. Most people now saw the CCC program as another American triumph over a very dire situation.

Hazel Lake, George Lake's widow, was one of those people. I first saw 92-year-old Hazel being guided around the partially cleared Hamlin CCC camp. Her daughter was helping her navigate around stumps and woodchuck holes. Under her arm she held a long, folded once, eight and one-halfx26-inch antique photo taken with a special lens. It was one



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

of those photos the CCC took every six months of the 150 or so young men who worked in the camp during that enlistment period - kind of like one of those old grade school class photos but of a much larger class.

I interrupted their "self-tour" and Hazel proudly showed me the photo. Her husband's face, along with a few others, was right on the crease because he was in the middle of CCC Company 1252 as it assembled in front of the Mess Hall of Camp S. P. - 53, Hamlin NY (S.P. = State Park). George's face was all crinkled up because of the fold but Hazel took a 3x4 snapshot out of her pocket to show me what he really looked like. In the snapshot, George is standing near the flagpole on a snow free January day, with Barracks #1 and #2 in the distance behind him.



George Lake, January 1937.

George lived in Medina, NY, and had joined the CCC in 1936 while he was courting Hazel. He promised his girlfriend that he would come home every weekend to visit her. But Hamlin was not just down the road from Medina. It was 30 miles away, but George kept his promise. Every Friday after work he'd sign out of camp knowing he had to be back Sunday evening. Sometimes he'd get a ride from someone who worked at the camp and sometimes he'd hitchhike. Quite often, he didn't make it back in time and he'd be

assigned a lot of extra KP duty. But George didn't mind. It was worth it!

Once he walked the entire way. He wore out his shoes and the bottoms fell off halfway back. When he finally arrived at camp, very late, he put on the tops of his shoes - without the bottoms - and laced them up. He was embarrassed and didn't want anyone to know what had happened.

Five-foot-five-and-a-half George told his family that he enjoyed camp life and did pass along to them one or two memories. He was very strong for his size and fit right in with the rest of the guys. To be, as we say, "cool" like the other guys, he'd hold a sledgehammer out at arm's length, raise it high in the air, and while staring right at it, slowly lower it down to touch the hammer to his forehead. He and his friends even got involved in camp politics and blew the whistle on one of the camp officers who was selling the good eggs that came into the camp and feeding the men "cold storage eggs" that were often spoiled or had chicks inside. But, he said that he also missed his sweetheart and after one six-month assignment, he was ready to go home.

A few days before mustering out, George was working in the kitchen (KP duty again) and was told to fix up a meal for the camp Commander. Since the Commander was an officer, George fixed up the tray to look extra appetizing. When the Commander got the meal, he demanded to see whoever it was that prepared it!

George went to the Commander, thinking he was in some kind of trouble. Instead, the Commander asked him to cook for him on a regular basis. George explained that his hitch was almost up, but the Commander asked him to re-enlist for another year. George was flattered but said he had been gone from home long enough.

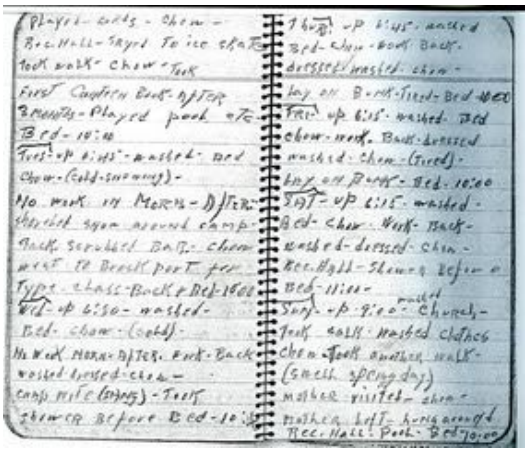
And that's why Hazel was at the Hamlin CCC site. George had passed away in 2003 and she just wanted to see where he walked from all those weekends in 1936 - just to be with her. She wanted to see where he was standing in those two CCC pictures she had of him. I took her to the exact locations, and I could tell it meant a lot to her to be able to stand where her George had stood.

Hazel visited the site with different family members two more times after that, that I know of. I gave the tours, but I think she can probably give a tour without me now. Shortly after her first visit she had the long photo professionally repaired and had a copy made for me. If the Park ever gets around to turning the old farmhouse at 968 Moscow Road into a museum and visitor's center, you'll be able to see that photo!

Jimmy Giancaterin lived in Rochester but, somehow, a rather large collection of memorabilia he had carefully saved from his 18-month CCC experience ended up in the next town to the west of the Hamlin CCC camp. Less than a month before it burned to the ground, Cora, who lives in Kendall Mills, bought a shopping bag full of "stuff" that had been sitting for many years in the attic of a residence in downtown Kendall. She thought it might contain some antique postcards she could add to her husband's collection. Finding none, she prepared to toss the bag into the garbage. But first she looked up my telephone number.

"Are you the guy who has been working at the old CCC campsite in Hamlin?" she asked. I told her I was, and she explained how she had come by the bag of odds and ends. "I was about to throw it all away," she said, "when I noticed the address on some letters - some guy in Barracks #5, Hamlin, New York. Are they something you might be interested in?" I raced to Cora's house before she had a chance to change her mind! We had yet to clear the ground where Barracks #5 had once stood but we'd get right to it now!

The bag contained a treasure trove. There were a total of 140 letters and cards, all addressed to James Giancaterin (jin-katter-inn), a member of C.C.C Company 1252, S.P. 53 in Hamlin (S.P. = State Park). The bag also contained two small, shirt pocket size, spiral bound notebooks that turned out to be diaries. Jimmy G, as some of his CCC buddies called him, always had a pencil with him and he made an entry in the tiny diaries every day he was in camp. (He was in the CCC for three hitches - one and a half years.) Besides a priceless collection of the twelve page newspapers the CCC boys published in camp once a week, there were black and white negatives of 60 photos, three framed photos taken in an arcade, a belt and buckle from a military uniform, CCC patches, some beaded handicrafts and several personal documents that had to do with the before, during and after of his enlistment in the Civilian Conservation Corps. I have never heard of a CCC collection as complete as this one!



Jimmy G lived on Emerson Street in Rochester and had dropped out of school in 1937 at the beginning of his junior year. He was a good student, but his father had recently died in a local glass factory accident and his mother, who spoke only Italian, was left to support him, a brother and a sister. A CCC enlistment would pay him $5 a month and $25 a month would be sent directly to his mother. He chose the Hamlin camp so he could occasionally visit his family on weekends.

He settled into camp life quickly. It wasn't long before he was singing solo in front of all 186 of his fellow CCCers on Camp Night, working on the weekly newspaper staff, enjoying the nickname "Lady Killer," operating a jack hammer in the Hulberton quarries

(mining the Medina sandstone for the State Park buildings), riding in the back of a truck Tuesday evenings to take a typing course in Brockport, and taking full advantage of everything else CCC camp life offered the young men who had signed up to help their country survive the Great Depression of the 1930s. When his family came to camp to visit, he proudly gave them a tour of the lake front to show them what the CCC was accomplishing in the Park. When U.S. Army officers at Fort Dix in New Jersey became short of office staff, a very deserving and qualified Jimmy G was sent there, on loan for a few weeks, to help them out.

But, as part of what is appearing to be a local CCC tradition, Jimmy G never told any of this to his own kids. All his future wife ever knew was that he was in the CCC - period. There never were any reunions with the guys he shared the camp experiences with and, as I have said before, that seems to be the way it was with almost all of the CCC "graduates" I have ever talked to or researched.

But did you notice how very important it was for him to preserve those memories of the things that gave his life new direction and meaning in those troubled times? Just living them and remembering them wasn't enough for Jimmy G. He stuffed all of that memorabilia into the big paper bag and stashed the bag in Kendall. Not even close to his home! But it was safe. And it just sat there for 70 years until Cora rescued it and handed it to me!

It wasn't until one of his daughters stumbled across a story in the Suburban News about finding the letters that I got the rest of the story. He had three daughters and two sons, and his daughter Sandy called me right away. Then Sandy and her husband Tom hurried to my house to see for themselves what I had. Her father had died in the 1970s and she did not own one single thing that her father had ever touched! She was "blown away" with what she learned about her "Dad" as she sat at my dining room table, going through that pile of "stuff!"

I made copies of everything in the bag I could for Sandy. She understood that I wanted to keep the originals (in a fireproof container) for viewing in a museum the State has promised to help us build (someday!) in the old farmhouse at the CCC site. But I did give her a couple of items that her Dad had touched. A few weeks later Sandy hosted a dinner party at her house and one of her sisters and one of her brothers attended. My wife and I were the entertainment. They all learned about a part of their father's life they didn't know existed.

My knowledge of the Hamin CCC camp leapt forward with leaps and bounds because of Jimmy G's collection. His meticulous diaries told me a lot about camp life in a barracks that no one had ever mentioned. He even dated for me changes that were made to the camp that no one else had records of (e.g. plywood added to inside walls, new sinks in the washroom, additions to the Education Building). What went on in camp over the holidays? Check out Jimmy's diaries!

Jimmy G heard that there was a CCC camp near the west coast that was close to the Golden Gate Bridge. He got it in his head that he could be the first member of his

family to actually see that landmark. At the end of his second tour of duty at the Hamlin camp he transferred to the CCC camp in Lovelock Nevada. Jimmy then wrote and asked his Mom if she would sign over one of her allotment checks to him so he could buy a camera and finance the hitchhike to the Golden Gate. She was as excited as he was and off he went!

Jimmy G's family and I have prints of all 60 of those photos.

Jimmy kept up his diary in the Lovelock camp and snapped the last few pictures left on his camera when he got back to Emerson Street in Rochester. Sometime after that, he stashed that bag in Kendall, joined the Navy, raised a family, took up bowling as a hobby and never looked back on the CCC. Unfortunately, he learned to smoke while in the CCC and died of emphysema in the 1970s.



Jimmy G on the way to Nevada.



Chester Terpin pre-WWII.

Chester Terpin did the best job ever of covering up the fact that he was once in the CCC. In fact, Chester Terpin and his CCC story would never have come to light if it had not been for Jimmy G's story coming to light, first.



There was a large rock, a boulder in the bushes behind the Hamlin Beach State Park's new office building and Park Manager, Jay Bailey, wanted to know if it had anything to do with the CCC. Local lore had the rock being part of an Indian legend and Jay was in favor of showing it off to the public, but first, he wanted to make sure it was not an undocumented grave marker.

It did look a little strange. According to the legend, for some reason, a pre-glacier Indian chief sat down hard on the rock, and it took the shape of his behind. The rock was in fact about the height of a chair and the top was contoured like an old iron tractor seat.

But after chipping away at the face of the rock, someone with not a lot of stonework practice behind them, had chiseled the name "TERPIN" across the front. And there were no other boulders like it anywhere in the area. If it was a grave marker, I would be more inclined to think it was a gravestone for a pet rather than a human being. But I told Jay I'd check it out.

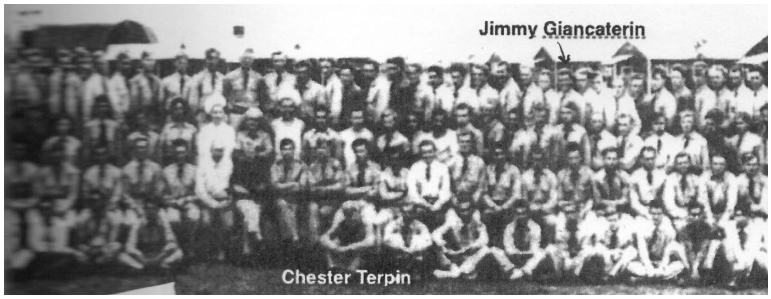


There were no Terpins in the Rochester phone book using that spelling. That led me to believe that there might have once been a dog in the neighborhood by the name of Terpentine. He could be buried there and the chiseler spelled it wrong and simply never finished the engraving job.

Then I recalled seeing one of those long and narrow group CCC photos hanging on the wall of Mary Smith's history center. It looked a lot like Hazel Lake's antique photo, but Mary's was a lot fancier. Hers was surrounded by other camp photos, and, unlike Hazel's, this one had a list of the names of all the guys in the photo. I had never given it a close look because it was too high on the wall, but with the Terpin rock thing going around in my mind I climbed up on Mary's filing cabinets and gave the picture a closer look.

Would you believe it! "Chester Terpin" was in the list of names. There was no way of knowing which guy he was but while going

over the names I also saw "James Giancaterin" listed! What a coincidence. I did manage to find Jimmy G standing in the back row.[4]



I raced home and got out my collection of the Hamlin Special CCC newspapers Jimmy G had sorta "left to me." I checked all of the articles titled "New Arrivals at the Camp." Sure enough, in the April 27, 1938, issue, a Chester Terpin "from the Buffalo area" was mentioned. My wife got on her computer and found three or four Terpins listed south of Buffalo.

I wrote a "Dear Terpin Family" letter and sent a copy of it to each of the addresses. I also enclosed a rather poor copy of a part of that long photo hanging on Mary's wall. Before the week was over, I had a reply announcing, "Chester Terpin was my father!" I got in touch with Chester's family and arranged for them to come to Hamlin for a tour of the site.



Terpin Family

When Pat, Chester Terpin's daughter, got out of the car and walked over to the "Terpin Rock" sign where I was waiting for her and the rest of the Terpin family, she had a very surprised look on her face. "For a minute I was shocked," she said. "You look just like him and he was short like you are." We were off to a great start!

Everyone in the family took turns sitting on "Chester's Rock" and posing for pictures. I heard someone call it "Chester's inspiration seat." And then the stories about Chester began and kept coming until the main event of the day was over - a tour of the CCC camp site.

As a teenager, Chester had been "running the numbers" for some mobsters in Buffalo. His mother was afraid he could be killed and told him to sign up for the CCC "or else." He ended up in Hamlin's CCC camp but didn't fit in right away. His very severe acne made him so self-conscious that he never looked you in the face if he had to talk to you. But one family member remembered Chester telling them that in six months the acne went away. Diet and fresh air? It doesn't matter. Chester became a new kid. He's the little blond guy sitting on the grass in the front row of that long group photo. His daughter Pat spotted him immediately when she looked at the copy I mailed to her.

[4] There had to have been at least 12 of those long group photos taken in the Hamlin camp. Mary and I have only seen two. What are the odds that one of those had been hanging on the wall of the North Star History Center for years and had BOTH Jimmy Giancaterin AND Chester Terpin in it?

While we were walking his kids told me that every summer Chester Terpin took them camping at State Parks but only the ones the CCC had worked on. They never knew why but over the years he "hit them all" and then started again at the top of the list the following summer. He was doing that with his grandkids when he died of a heart attack in his daughter's driveway at the age of 59.

No one in his family had any photos of him in the CCC camp and the best I could do was to show them exactly where Chester was sitting on the ground when that long picture was taken. But we didn't need pictures. As we walked around the camp they learned more and more about their father as they saw what the camp had to offer young men like Chester Terpin.

I brought along the original of that photo for the tour and had a wire flag in the ground marking the spot where Chester sat for it. I also put a flag in the ground where Jimmy G was standing in the photo.

Chester Terpin only had a fifth grade education and his kids knew it. But they also knew that he was an excellent carpenter, mason, electrician, mechanic, and cook! They told me he built himself a 75-pound pull bow from a stick of wood, hand carved an entire ornate staircase, had a stove in his kitchen smaller but similar to the ones in a CCC Mess Hall, built the only Medina sandstone backyard barbecue in Buffalo (and other sand-stone things), hand sewed big things (tents) and little things (hunting clothes), had to have a shower so he built one in his cellar, built the entire house they grew up in, knew all about privies, was a pool shark and shuffle board champ, loved to make apple pie in huge sheets, and one of his favorite desserts was "Artificial Ice Cream," a favorite of the cooks in the Hamlin CCC camp. His kids marveled at his talents but never thought about where he learned all that. Until that day! When I showed the Terpin family the Education Building and listed some of the courses taught there, one of his daughters blurted out for all to hear, "I always wondered how he could help me with my algebra with only a fifth grade education!"



Chester Terpin in WWII.

I have read a lot about Roosevelt's CCC program and its 4,500 camps but I have never read about any enlistee who took away from the program as much as Chester Terpin did. He wanted all the program had to offer and I never heard of anyone who got more.

Jerry Kaczov was identified in a couple of pictures at camp. After the CCC he enlisted in the Army and became a decorated WWII soldier.

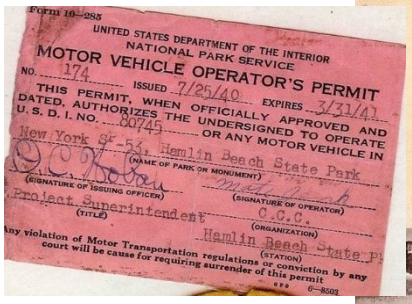


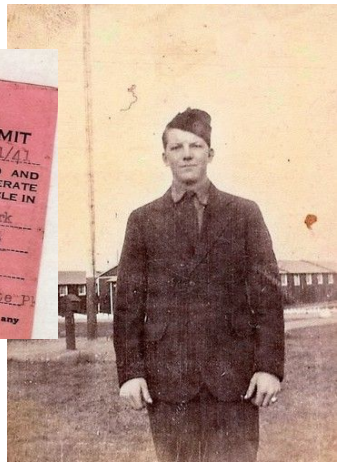
He is pictured here at the rear of the Army Garage, (looking south).



Jerry Kaczov, worked in the kitchen for a while. Graduates from the west were astonished to see hot dogs on the menu. For entertainment, Jerry told them he was rounding up dogs for dinner. Jerry is on the parade grounds with the barracks behind him. The camera is facing north.

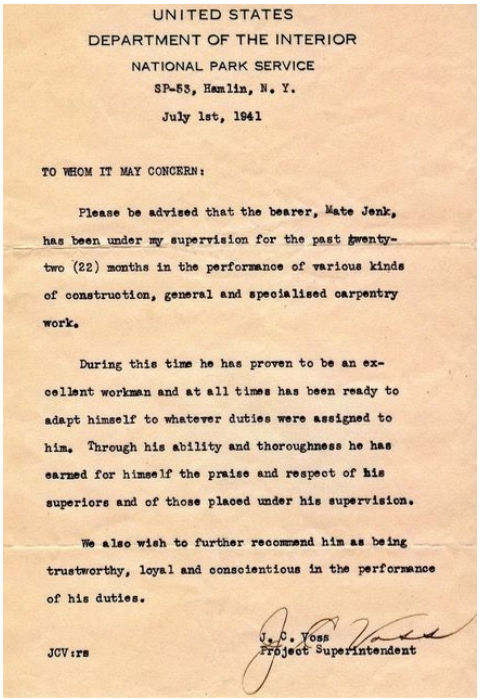
Mate Jenk (Matty) was also at the CCC camp in Hamlin. He was enrolled in the CCC on October 16, 1939, and was honorably discharged on June 19, 1941, to accept employment. He earned his operator's license to drive trucks in Hamlin Beach State Park and he had a lot of pictures of himself working with the CCC trucks. His grandson lives in Garland, NY, and shared an album of pictures and information from his grandfather's time in the CCC at Hamlin. We think he stayed local. He did attend the first Hamlin CCC reunion in 1980.


UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
MOTOR VEHICLE OPERATOR'S PERMIT
NO. 174 ISSUED 7/25/40 EXPIRES 7/31/41
THIS PERMIT, WHEN OFFICIALLY APPROVED AND DATED, AUTHORIZES THE UNDERSIGNED TO OPERATE U. S. D. I. NO. 8045 OR ANY MOTOR VEHICLE IN
New York SP-53, Hamlin Beach State Park
(NAME OF PARK OR MONUMENT)
(SIGNATURE OF ISSUING OFFICER)
(SIGNATURE OF OPERATOR)
Project Superintendent
(TITLE)
C.C.C.
(ORGANIZATION)
Hamlin Beach State Pk
(STATION)
Any violation of Motor Transportation regulations or conviction by any court will be cause for requiring surrender of this permit





Mate Jenk standing by the sign at the west entrance to the camp. Notice the farmhouse at 968 Moscow Road in the background.


UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
SP-53, Hamlin, N. Y.
July 1st, 1941

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

Please be advised that the bearer, Mate Jenk, has been under my supervision for the past twenty-two (22) months in the performance of various kinds of construction, general and specialized carpentry work.

During this time he has proven to be an excellent workman and at all times has been ready to adapt himself to whatever duties were assigned to him. Through his ability and thoroughness he has earned for himself the praise and respect of his superiors and of those placed under his supervision.

We also wish to further recommend him as being trustworthy, loyal and conscientious in the performance of his duties.

JCV:rs

J. C. Voss
Project Superintendent


CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS
1980 Reunion
CO. 1252 SP-53
HAMLIN BEACH, N. Y.
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 1980 1 P. M. to ?
V F W POST - HAMLIN, N. Y.
Buffet Dinner 5:30 No. 50
COMPLIMENTARY

Ed Wagner was in charge of the construction going on at Hamlin Beach State Park. In 2009, he was still alive and living in Florida.



Ed Wagner, Second in Command, feeding a deer[5] outside of the Department of Interior building.



We are assuming that Ed is working for the Department of the Interior. He is standing in the parade ground with the barracks behind him. Camera is facing north.

[5] The deer was raised from a baby after its mother was killed on Moscow Road. Its favorite food was cigarette butts. It eventually wandered away.

Everything I Know About the Hamlin German POW Camp

[Mary Smith got me off to a good start.]

by Ed Evans - November 2017

When the Hamlin CCC camp closed down in 1941, I do not think there was a definite plan for the future of the camp. Luckily, as it turned out, the Mess Hall, the Recreation Building, the Education Building, the five barracks, the latrine and the five administration buildings at the south end of camp remained untouched and a caretaker was hired to keep them intact. Some of the other buildings, however, disappeared between 1941 and 1944.



Jim Gavigan, Caretaker

I believe that the Army Garage, and the Dept. of Interior Garage, and the two oil storage buildings were sold or donated to local people shortly after the CCC camp closed, but the "fate and date" of the blacksmith shop and the large storage building that bordered the stone cutting area at the North end of the camp is unknown. There is strong evidence that the camp's only portable building was left standing at the west end of the heavy duty 50-foot-wide road that ran across the North end of the camp and was given a cement floor and plumbing in the spring of 1944 to become a washroom for the POW camp guards. I also believe that the education building - which stood next to the newly built washroom - was outfitted to house the prison guards for whom the washroom was built.

I know for sure that the sawmill building was still standing in the late 1940s, early 1950s. I don't think the POW camp used it, but the State Park might have operated it because the Park was still expanding during the war.



Sometime after 1948 everything disappeared except the sawmill and some power poles. (photo gift of Dianne Grimm). The aerial photo shows that the sawmill was still standing long after the order to raze the POW camp was issued, untouched, as if the sawmill belonged to a neighbor.

When were the buildings used by the POW camp removed from the site? When the POW camp officially closed in January of 1946, some of the buildings used by the POW camp probably "disappeared" right away (e.g. the barracks which could be removed in sections), but former residents of the old farmhouse that still stands next to the camp property on Moscow Road remember a rotting, tumbledown "shed of some kind" standing in the tall grass

> Most probably a section of the supply building and evidence that not all of the POW camp buildings were immediately removed from the site when the POW camp closed in January of 1946.

and brush where the Army's Supply Building used to stand. Another former resident of



Boy and dog from the family that lived at 968 Moscow Road after the Leverenz family moved out. Ed gave them a tour of the site. The trees in the background are the trees around the basketball court used by the POW guards. (picture taken late 1950s, early 1960s?) The rec building would be in the upper left corner of the picture if it was still there. Boy used to play in the area of the southwest corner of the camp near the flagpole (POW camp flagpole) and he said there was a shed there that was probably the north end of the supply building.

the old farmhouse remembers post war teenage lifeguards from Churchville bicycling to the park to work and unrolling their sleeping bags in some of the POW camp buildings after their shifts. He also remembers seeing some artwork by the POWs on the walls of another building a few years after the POW camp closed.

I have letters that show that after 1941, ownership of the camp shifted from the Army to the State Park and back again to the Army. Then it sat idle for two years. In 1943, the camp was used to house migrant workers from the Bahamas. In the fall of that year, Italian POWs took the place of the migrant workers and little to no remodeling of the camp was required. Barbed wire fences, guard towers, etc., were not required because the Italian POWs were not hostile. But that only lasted about two months. To the disappointment of the farmers and canning factory operators who were in desperate need of a dependable labor supply, Italy became an ally of the United States at the end of 1943 and the Italian POWs had to be released.

In the spring of 1944, work was begun to modify the CCC camp to meet the government regulations required for it to become a German prisoner of war camp. All expenses for the conversion had to be paid for by the farmers (Growers Association) and the owners of the local canning factories. Not one dime came from the government!

Once the POW camp was okayed by the Army Corps of Engineers, the main POW camp at Niagara Falls would supply whatever number of workers the growers and canning factory owners needed for a two-week period-every two weeks. The farmers would then pay the government $4 a day for each laborer they needed (half day orders were accepted). Out of that $4 the government paid the POWs 80 cents a day. The $3.20 remainder paid for all the food the POWs ate, their transportation to this country, the eventual trip home, and the government still had money left over to buy war bonds. [That was good business!]

The requirements for the building of the POW camp were very specific, but the Army Corps would bend a little to help the farmers and factory owners bring down the cost of the conversion. The barbed wire fence had to have 33 strands of wire spaced close together at the bottom and wider apart at the top. The bottom two strands of wire had to be buried in the ground - one strand one foot down and the other six inches above that. And there had to be a three-foot "lean

in" top to the fence. 6x6 posts had to be used at each corner of the stockade and two 8x8s set in cement supported the double-door twelve-foot-wide main gate. The ten miles plus of barbed wire[1] used in the Hamlin camp was to be stapled to uprights consisting of 2x6s spaced exactly five feet apart. Every other upright could be a short one - maybe three feet high.

The cost of digging a trench around the camp and dropping in the first strand of barbed wire was estimated to be $1800 but two of the local farmers thought they could dig that trench with a plow and their tractors and save that money. They roughly staked out the rectangular perimeter of a stockade that ended up being 370 feet wide in front (southern side facing Moscow road), 507 feet long along the western side, 490 feet long along the eastern side, and 420 feet across the back. The odd measurements produced the irregular parallelogram because the two farmers had to plow perfectly straight lines but miss the five administration buildings, the recreation hall, the education building, and the cement floors where the tool house complex once stood. When they were done, they asked the Army Corps if the trench would do, and the engineers said it was as good a job as they could do! However, the farmers only put one strand of wire in the trench and got away with it!

There are no known photos, paintings, or drawing of the Hamlin POW camp in existence. Shawn Lessord, his daughter, and I found and unburied the actual, one and only, buried bottom strand of



wire in the fence line every ten or twenty feet or so, all the way around the camp. A couple of years before that I had dug up the tip of a plow that had been discarded after it had obviously been broken off but at that time, I had no idea as to why a plow tip would be where I found it.

The Duffy Mott canning factory helped cut another cost. In place of the government required 2x6s, Duffy Mott loaned its reserve supply of warehouse roof boards to the cause. They were ultra strong tongue and groove 3x5s and worked just as well as the 2x6s! After the camp was dismantled, all but one of these tongue and groove boards were yanked out of the ground and returned to

When I finally figured out what that 3x5 stump of tongue and groove lumber was, I found the buried strand of barbed wire that ran by it with a little digging. That led to the tracing of the entire perimeter of the camp mentioned above. The heretofore ignored holes

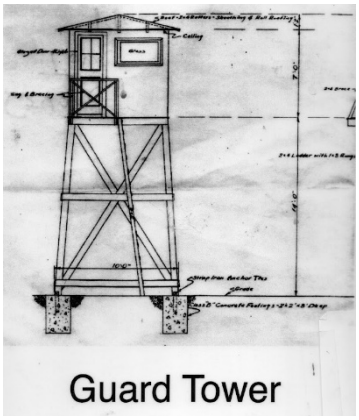


on one side of the 3x5 wooden stump turned out to be fence staple holes! You might say that the 3x5 tongue and groove stump was our Rosetta Stone for figuring out what the POW camp looked like since we had no photos to go by.

[1] When the POW camp was dismantled, the 10 plus miles of barbed wire used in the fence line were coiled and left for the local farmers to pick up as needed. Three of these coils are still sitting where they were put. The easiest one to spot is near the SW corner of the compound.

Duffy Mott. That one 3x5 fence upright had broken off about two feet above the ground and the work crew just left it there for us to find 70 plus years later!

The government required that the Hamlin POW camp have four guard towers - one at each corner but staggered so that the machine gun in each tower could fire along the fence line assigned to it without hitting another gun tower. I have blueprints which show that the towers were fitted with windows that could be popped out to fall into a box of sand in the case of an "emergency." The machine gun in each tower was mounted on a swivel that made it impossible for the gun to be turned and aimed into the compound (and the POWs knew this and were assured that they could not ever be accidentally shot if they were inside the compound).


Guard Tower

And one night, shots were indeed fired from the gun tower at the northeast corner of the camp. A young boy who lived in the old farmhouse at the time recalls hearing the shots and "couldn't hardly wait until morning to go out and see all the dead bodies." For 70 years local lore had it that a German POW, "crazy in the head," had made his way into the guard tower and fired the shots. But Gottfried Schulze, a POW now living in Germany, told me via email two years ago that he witnessed the shooting incident. He said that a shell-shocked American G.I. fired the volley in the direction of the lake. His comrades calmed him down and whisked him away.

Gottfried Schulze was drafted into the German army at the age of 17. He was sent to Anzio, Italy, for his first and last initiation to combat. His unit was wiped out and he was left for dead, his leg having been almost blown away. American medics rescued him and put him on a hospital ship. There, a doctor saved his life and his leg. (Gottfried took special care to see to it that I knew that he knew that the doctor who saved him was a German Jew!) After leaving the hospital ship, Gottfried spent three days at Niagara Falls. He said he could hear the water but never saw the falls. From there he was sent directly to Hamlin and remained there for a year and a half.



After returning to Germany, he finished his education, got his PhD in cybernetics, and held a seat at Rostock University (one of the oldest in Germany) until his retirement. He is in his nineties and has contributed much to my knowledge of the Hamlin POW camp. Recently, he sent me a copy of his rendition of a tour guide for the Hamlin POW camp! It is a masterpiece!


Gottfried Schulze (left) and Heinrich Willert (right) meet in Germany to share memories of more than 65 years ago while in the POW camp.

In other camps, the gun towers were anchored to the ground on cement bases. Hamlin's gun towers were anchored with channel iron driven into the ground and the

legs of the tower were bolted to the channel iron. Two pieces of that channel iron have been found but most of the iron anchors were discarded when the towers were pulled over and destroyed sometime after the camp closed. Evidence suggests that the towers were dragged to the southeast corner of the camp to be picked over or broken up.

While the CCC camp was being turned into a POW camp, the single cots were pulled out of the five barracks and replaced with bunk beds. This increased the capacity of the camp to 400 men. Still, the population of the camp sometimes went over 450 during the harvesting season. When that happened, 17 tents were pitched at the north end of the camp. Gottfried remembers being assigned to a tent when he first arrived at the Hamlin camp towards the end of the summer of 1944. A short time later, he was assigned to a bunk in Barracks #3 where he resided until the end of 1945.

The doubling of the capacity of the camp when it became a POW camp created a few problems. The mess hall was designed to feed 250 men in a single sitting. While I have no proof, it would seem to me that meals in the prison camp would have to have been served in shifts once in a while. It must have created a scheduling nightmare, but I have heard no complaints from the two POWs I am in contact with.

Gottfried seems to have been completely satisfied with the mess hall accommodations. He recently told me that contrary to the government regulation that required "spoons only" in POW mess halls, Hamlin's mess hall provided a complete set of flatware - spoon, fork, and knife. He said that in Hamlin the POWs even ate WITH the guards in the mess hall and in the Duffy Mott cafeteria.

The Geneva Convention said that the POWs were to be provided with the same food as the guards and they were to be allowed their own cooks, if they could provide them. So, in Hamlin, in spite of the sometimes extra-large population, there were two sets of cooks in the kitchen - Germans and U.S. Army. It didn't take long before the guards noticed the difference in the cuisine coming out of the kitchen. Soon, the Army cooks were let go and everyone in the camp ate what the German cooks turned out!

The Germans were also allowed to plant a garden next to the garden the residents of the old farmhouse tended. The produce was used in the mess hall kitchen by the German cooks.

Late in 1939, plywood was put on the inside walls of the barracks, the latrine and a few other CCC buildings. That made the barracks quite comfortable in the winter with the three coal-burning potbellied stoves, but when the occupants of the barracks doubled in number, the barracks were much too warm to be comfortable. When the first winter came to the newly opened POW camp, one stove had to be removed from each of the barracks!

Doubling the population of the camp in 1944 also created a problem with the latrine. It was crowded enough in the mornings with 200 CCC enlistees descending upon it every morning! What must it have been like with

up to 450 German POWs rushing to it in the mornings?

The latrine was a T-shaped building. The toilet part of the latrine was in the neck of the T and was nothing more than a fancy "sixteen holer," - two sets of eight seats in a row, back-to-back, over a cement "hole" (trench) 20 feet long, about three and a half feet wide and three and a half feet deep. A thin partition separated the two rows of toilet seats. Chemicals were regularly dumped into the cement trench to keep the sludge moving to a drain which then took it northward to a huge septic tank 20 feet x 20 feet by 10 feet deep where it was again treated with chemicals.

The cross bar of the T-shaped latrine building housed a trough type urinal, eight large farmhouse kitchen type sinks, and twelve open shower stalls. Hot water was provided 24/7 by a 500-gallon coal-fired boiler.

In 1939, the big sinks were replaced by 20 smaller sinks - probably a little bigger than drinking fountains - each with hot and cold running water.

But shortly after the prisoners arrived in the summer of 1944, the latrine burned to the ground. I suspect that the boiler was overworked trying to provide hot water for 450 early risers when it was only designed to meet the demands of 200 people. Local lore, however, said the fire was probably caused by a cigarette butt in a waste basket. But when you read the full account from which that bit of lore comes, you will find that the account is full of things that just couldn't be. For example, the account says that the gate to the camp could not be opened for the Hamlin fire trucks because there was no qualified officer available to okay the opening of the gate, and fire hoses were slow to be connected to the hydrants (there were no hydrants anywhere in or around the camp). Too much fiction. The guy who wrote the account makes himself sound like some kind of a hero because it was "HE," a civilian, who finally took the bull by the horns and opened the gate to the camp. On top of that, there are no records of the Hamlin Fire Department answering a call at the camp that summer.

Besides, the German soldiers were said to be much more vain about their appearance and clothing than the CCC enlistees.

When I quizzed Gottfried Schulze about the latrine, he remembered nothing at all about a fire. So, the fire must have happened before he got here because his memory is "right on" with the rest of the POW camp history. That would put the fire between the last week of June and the middle of August 1944.

Gottfried was here for a year and a half. Our other POW contact, Heinrich Willert, got here two months earlier, but has trouble remembering which events happened in which of the three camps he stayed in. He was only here for six months.

Whenever it happened, the problem was remedied in a hurry. I suspect that a tent was quickly erected over the "16 holer" and work was immediately begun rebuilding the entire structure. As further evidence that it was an overworked boiler that caused the fire, the camp management also elected to build a second washroom/shower room for the POWs fifty feet to the north of the latrine and included sinks with wringers so that the POWs could do their laundry. A thirteen-bay

garage for the CCC trucks used to stand on the site and the packed gravel floor where the trucks stood was perfect for accepting a hastily poured cement floor for the auxiliary washroom.

Note: There are no government records that I can find anywhere of anything pertaining to the construction or history of the Hamlin POW camp. But the floor of that auxiliary washroom is still there for all to see and that is official record enough for now. The earth fill around the burned and rebuilt latrine still contains "burned" relics from fire that destroyed the latrine a short while after the German POWs arrived. When we rake up some of those burned relics, we leave them on the cement floor of the latrine for all to see.

And, In spite of the fact that there are no official records of the construction and history of the camp, we know for sure that the entire burned down latrine was rebuilt on the spot because both Heinrich Willert and Gottfried Schulze commented on (or bragged about) being assigned to the best barracks in the camp - Barracks #3. It was the "best" barracks because Barracks #3 was the one closest to the latrine they used on late night visits - the latrine that has always been a hop, skip, and a jump from the back door of Barracks #3, before, during, and long after the fire. Heinrich's bunk was just inside the back door - the closest to the latrine you can get! Gottfried's bunk was about 10 bunks farther away.

Another big change was made in the POW camp shortly after it opened and a little before Gottfried got here. It was initiated when Barracks #3, Heinrich Willert's

Heinrich Willert could hardly wait to graduate from German high school. He hurried through his final exams (he was ready to skip them if it had been allowed) so that he could enlist in the Luftwaffe, the German Air force. Unfortunately, by that time in the war, Germany was short of planes, so he ended up in the Luftwaffe infantry.



Heinrich was sent to North Africa to fight with Rommel's army. He was captured there (Heinrich is careful to note that they did not surrender) and was sent to a number of different prison camps in Europe before ending up in Camp Howze, Texas, where the Nazis were separated from ordinary enlisted men. Seven months later he was sent to Fort Niagara to await assignment to a POW camp in western New York - and that turned out to be Hamlin. After six months in Hamlin, it was six months at Fort Niagara, followed by six months at Oakfield New York before heading back to Germany.

Back in Germany, Heinrich became a teacher. He taught what here would be social studies, and English. The East German government would not assign him to any prestigious schools because he refused to sign the communist pledge. But he persisted and before he retired, he had worked his way up to principal. As of this writing, he is in his nineties and living near Rostock. He has contributed much to my knowledge of the Hamlin POW camp.



Matthias Heinicke, Heinrich Willert (middle), Gottfried Schulze (right), Matthias (grandson of Heinrich) arranged the reunion between the two Hamlin POWs.

barracks, went on strike. The men in Barracks #3 sat on the ground in front of the barracks and refused to go to work. Heinrich described the incident in one of his letters to me.

The men were protesting because there was no place in the camp to go for recreation - to sit and chat, play board games, borrow a book, or to buy a candy bar or a bottle of hair tonic. Heinrich says that it wasn't long before a small gate in the fence opened (a gate just wide enough for a couple of people) and guards rushed into the compound with their rifles. The guards approached the sitting POWs and listened to their complaint. Soon, the guards left. And according to Heinrich, it wasn't very long before a recreation building became part of the camp! An account in Mary Smith's *Remembering Hamlin* book describes the facility and even mentions it featuring ping pong tables. When Gottfried came to the camp in late summer, the recreation building had already been up and running. He told me that he saved up his leftover money from his 80 cents a day and purchased an item in the PX section of the recreation building that he has treasured ever since - a calf skin wallet. The rest of the Recreation Building story has had to come in bits and pieces.

When the barbed wire fence was put up around the camp, the CCC Recreation Building was outside the POW compound. It was probably intended to be one of the CCC buildings set aside to be used by the 45 plus guards required for a POW camp as big as Hamlin's.[2] The barbed wire passed by the Recreation Building - about 20 feet from the front door!

After the sit-down strike in front of Barracks #3, the barbed wire fence was reconfigured to include the CCC Recreation Building in the POW compound. The wire coming from the north only needed to be cut and run to the NW corner of the Rec building. Then, new wire was connected to the SW corner of the Rec building and run to the SW corner post of the compound. It threw the rectangular shape of the POW prison camp out of whack, but it quickly took care of Barracks #3's complaint. An irregularity in the path of the buried barbed wire we found and traced to determine the perimeter of the camp (see above) supports this idea.

Technical info: A few feet to the north of the 4x4 SW corner post, the buried barbed wire abruptly ends. It appears that even buried wire was pulled out of the ground when the rest of the fence that ran by the front of the Rec building was taken down. (There was a recent disturbance of the ground in that part of the camp - in the early 1980s, the Park created a clearing in the overgrowth - but I talked to the bulldozer operator. He told me he did not venture that far south.) Also, there is a rectangular arrangement of bricks near the SW corner post of the barbed wire fence line that was probably a decoration around the base of one of the legs of a guard tower - Army camp ornamentation. It suggests that when the fence line was changed to take in the Rec building, the location of the guard tower at the SW corner of the camp interfered with the new fence line and had to be re-positioned.

[2] There were 14 POW camps in western NY and Hamlin was the second largest.

Heinrich's account of the strike also revealed another important fact about the building of the camp. When he described the guards coming through the small gate in the fence, he was very specific as to the location of that gate. So specific that I was able to clear up a mystery about some crude paving (consisting of odd sized and odd shaped pieces of what looked like broken up sidewalk) a short way to the east of the SW corner of the barbed wire fence line. Thanks to Heinrich, we now know that wherever there was a gate in the fence, pavement of some kind had to be put down to keep from wearing a depression under the closed gate. A second section of that kind of "fence line paving" was also later found at the NE corner of the compound. The gate that used that paving provided for, among other things, the bringing of coal into the prison compound from a pile just outside the fence. That coal pile is still there!

The five buildings closest to Moscow Road on the southern end of the camp were used by the Army officers and the guards. The front building closest to the Mess Hall was the U.S. Army Quarters during the CCC era and was ready made to serve as quarters for some of the prison guards in 1944 and 1945. The old CCC Infirmary to the west of the Army Quarters also served as the Infirmary[3] for the prison camp. The middle building[4] of the "south end five" required very little remodeling to become additional housing for the guards. Like the Army Quarters and the Infirmary, this building had running water (showers, sinks, and toilets) and only needed some additional bunks.

The littlest building of the "south end five" became the office of the Commandant of the prison camp. The building next door used to be the supply building for the CCC camp and most likely became the supply building for the POW camp. It also quite likely became the living quarters for the soldiers who were in charge of the supply building. But, neither the Commandant's Office nor the supply building had running water, so without some alterations they couldn't even have a chemical toilet!

Evidence seems to indicate that a temporary one-inch water line was run to the Commandant's Office and the supply building. The water pipe was put down on top of the ground along the edge of the East/West roadway at the south end of camp and covered over with dirt. A section of that water pipe going to the supply building was found in 2009.

However the makeshift plumbing was engineered, the occupants of the supply building appear to have modified it to better suit their needs. When the building was emptied sometime after the POW camp closed in January of 1946, everything left in the building was tossed out the north door. Among those tossed items was all the stonework for a CCC crafted drinking fountain - the kind found in the State Park - complete with the very special top with the rounded-out bowl.[5] (The pieces are still

[3] Prisoners with serious illnesses or injuries or prisoners requiring dental work were transported to Fort Niagara.

[4] It used to be the quarters for a few Department of Interior officials who oversaw the government expenditures while the CCC built Hamlin Beach State Park.

[5] In 2016, the State Park suddenly removed the bowled-out stone top of the drinking fountain from the POW camp site. No reason has been given - it has not been put into use elsewhere - and we reported the incident to Albany. We have since put a plain, flat stone of similar size in its place so that the tour guide will read okay.

there where they landed over 70 years ago.) None of the pieces of stone have any mortar stuck to them. In other words, the fountain has never been permanently installed anywhere.



When other evidence was gathered, I came to the conclusion that the supply building residents must have wanted something fancier than a bucket to catch the water coming from their temporary water line. So, they went to the nearby barn used by the CCC to build and store Medina sandstone drinking fountain and fireplace "kits" and helped themselves to a leftover drinking fountain kit. They assembled it, without mortar, under their water tap and drilled a hole in the floor to provide a drain from the bowl.

That idea seemed a bit far-fetched until we found a French drain[6] starting under the middle of the west wall of the building and running over 50 feet all the way to the ditch along the west roadway into the camp. Furthermore, there is a photo of the inside west wall of the supply building when it served the CCC camp. There is nothing shown in the photograph of anything on that wall that would possibly need a French drain under the floor!

With all of the attention the Hamlin POW camp has gotten since we started clearing it in 2008, several people have commented that they remember riding past the site and seeing the flag pole. In the old days, passers-by used the flagpole to tell them where the camp site was. But the people who made the flagpole comments to me were younger than me. They were too young to have been referring to the CCC flagpole. They must have seen the POW camp flagpole - or one of them.

When the CCC camp became a POW camp, the nearly 70 foot tall CCC flagpole was cut off flush with the cement base that held it upright. According to the Geneva Convention the Army wasn't supposed to cram our ideology down the throats of the POWs. Having our guards line up every day to salute the American flag while standing in the center of the POW's living space did not seem proper. The sawed off flagpole was moved to an area at the SW corner of the camp site - close to Moscow Road and close to the western driveway leading into camp - and erected as you would erect a telephone pole. The entire area was reserved for the guards to congregate in. A basketball backboard was even installed close to the driveway.

[6] A French drain is a narrow ditch containing golf ball sized stones. The ditch and stones act like a drainpipe.

The "new" flagpole and the basketball backboard can be seen in an aerial photo



that was taken of the old farmhouse and barn that borders the eight-acre camp site. The pilot/photographer just missed getting the barbed wire fence in the picture but did catch the corner where the guards paid respect to the flag and played. [If the camera had caught the POW camp, someone would have been in big trouble!] A member of the family who lived in the farmhouse when the picture was taken let me copy the photo. [It's the same guy who heard the machine gun being fired in the night.]

As luck would have it, giant versions of the little pine trees in the aerial photo are still standing there today. Using the trees and developing a distance scale, I figure that I was able to mark the exact position of the relocated flagpole within a foot or so of where it once stood. I put in the ground a white plastic post with wire flags on top to mark the spot. Three years ago, one of our volunteers (Dan Wilson) was pulling up a small honeysuckle stump near my marker when he discovered some hardware that used to be part of the flagpole - within inches of my plastic post with the flags on top!

The fact that the original CCC flagpole was moved to the SW corner of the camp in 1944 created a problem when 88-year-old Margie Boyer (phonetic spelling) visited the camp in 2009. Margie, when she was 21, spent one summer driving a "guard car".[7] (her brand new, white, 1941 Chevy convertible) behind a bus carrying POWs to work outside the Hamlin area. She was very anxious to re-visit the site. Park manager, Marty Howden, drove Margie around in the State Park's John Deere Gator until she got her bearings. From her we learned that the buses and trucks that were to transport the POWs out of town every morning came in the western entrance to the camp, turned right onto the east/west driveway closest to Moscow Road, and stopped at the Army quarters building (just south of the Mess Hall). Margie and the other guard car drivers pulled in the eastern entrance to the camp, drove towards the main gate "and made one lap around the flagpole" and stopped. Her words! She says it was the battle cry of all the guard car drivers - "one lap around the flagpole."



That would place her facing south, aimed at the rear of the bus that would be taking on POWs for her to follow! Sitting there in the John Deere gator she was reliving it all. She recalls looking in her rear-view mirror and seeing the POWs walking past the mess hall and filing through a gate in the fence towards her car. She was a very pretty, young lady,

[7] The "guard cars" carried three or four armed guards with extra ammo clips at the ready on the seat beside them.

and they whistled at her as they passed her car (on their way to the bus). When the bus pulled out, she cut in behind it and other vehicles took their places.

It's Margie's "one lap around the flagpole" that created the problem once I had the new location of the sawed-off flagpole nailed down! The relocated flagpole was at the other side of the camp from where Margie pulled in every morning!

There must have been another flagpole on the east side of the camp - near the MAIN gate. And it seems logical. The POW camp was a government installation. Don't most government installations have a flag by the main entrances? It wouldn't have to be the historic flagpole - the pole that graced the CCC camp. It could have been a store-bought metal flagpole! And probably it was.

Then, too, is the issue of symmetry. All of the Army camps I have seen in photos seem to be as symmetrical as possible.[8] With that in mind, I noticed that the plot of ground in front of the main gate that Margie drove around was the exact shape and size as the plot of ground that contained the sawed-off flagpole and basketball backboard on the opposite corner of the camp. If there was to be a flagpole for Margie to drive around, it would probably be symmetrically positioned with respect to the other flagpole. So, I measured the distance the sawed-off flagpole was from the side property line and the east/west driveway. Then I found the matching location in front of the main gate and marked it with a plastic post with wire flags on top. Until some other evidence shows up, I'm calling that the location of the flagpole Margie and the other guard car drivers rallied around!

There is a flat area about 10 feet by 10 feet to the right of the main gate into the camp. It is where the guard tower stood. You can still see the ditch along the east property line suddenly end at the flat spot coming from the south and begin again after the flat spot.

Most people I talk to about the camp want to know how the POWs felt about being confined here and how did the local people feel about there being a camp full of enemy soldiers so close to their homes. As I go through all of the stories I have collected in the past nine years, I remember being told by people "who know" that there were only two local farmers who spoke against the German POW camp in Hamlin. I recall the name of one of those farmers but never mention him specifically because his descendants still live here and would not appreciate being singled out. But all of the rest of the stories in my collection have only good things to say about the camp - stories from the participants on both sides of the barbed wire!

At one of my presentations, a church in Webster, a man who was nine years old when the POW camp was in operation had sent in a story he had written to be read to me and the audience. Now I use this story at all of my talks and tours of the site. I never have to read it. I remember every word of it.

The story took place after dark during the winter of 1944-45. The nine-year-old boy was home alone with his mother. They lived on a farm seven miles from the POW camp.

[8] The Hamlin CCC camp itself was built by the Army and showed a lot of symmetry.

It was early evening, and a terrible snowstorm was raging outside. Suddenly, there was a loud knock on the door. The mother opened the door with her startled son holding on to her sleeve. There stood a big soldier clutching a rifle. "Ma'am," the soldier said. "We have three trucks full of prisoners out here and we can't possibly make it back to the camp in this storm. Can we please put them in your barn for the night?"

The boy looked up at his mom, a bit scared and anxious to hear her reply. "Oh no," the mother said. "You can't put them in our barn. Bring them in the house." And 27 German prisoners filed into the house.

The man who had sent in the story ended it by mentioning that as the prisoners filed in, they couldn't help but notice his mother's beautifully framed wedding certificate hanging on the wall. It was written in German!!! "That was it," the story ended. "No one slept that night. It was blah blah blah all night long!"

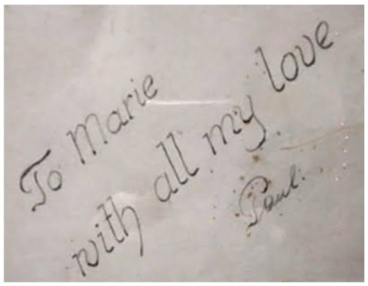
Both Heinrich and Gottfried told me that it was a very few weeks after they got here that they decided that "this is where they wanted to live after the war." They were very impressed with what they experienced here - in Hamlin! Unfortunately, they later found out the Geneva Convention said that after the war, all POWs had to return to where they signed up. Then, they could do the paperwork required to come back. But it was a double unfortunate for Gottfried and Heinrich because they both had to return to what would be then, Communist East Germany - and no one got to leave there!

I did get to meet a former German POW who did do the paperwork and did return to the United States. It took him five or six years to make it happen, but it did happen. He led a good life here and eventually retired from a machine shop that did work for Kodak. He got to travel to 46 different states and three times visited Germany on business. He'd usually stay in Europe two or three weeks but said that it was "always good to get back home."



Martin Scherdin, former German POW, who returned to Hamlin after the war, talking with Mary Smith 4/29/99 about the POW camp. He died in 2001.

Marie was a young lady who worked at Duffy Mott. She became romantically involved with a POW named Paul. He was a better than fair artist and he painted a large, beautiful portrait of Marie (over 12 inches by 20 inches) on heavy paper. On the back is written "To Marie with all my love, Paul." Marie "folded" the painting and kept it in a drawer through three



marriages. When Marie passed away a few years ago, her executor and friend gave it to me for safe keeping and gave me the rest of the story. After her second marriage failed, Marie tried to contact Paul. He was living in Germany, happily married, and asked her to please stop trying to call him. Marie went back and married her first husband again.

I had worked diligently for a couple of years trying to figure out where the main gate, the guard towers and northern boundary of the prison camp were. Unfortunately, there were no photographs of the camp anywhere and none of the locals could remember anything specific about the camp. But thanks to author Gretchen Duling of Youngstown, NY, I had finally made contact with a Heinrich Willert, a former POW living in Germany - a gentleman who had spent six months in our camp - and his first letter in answer to my list of questions was in the mail!

When the letter arrived I couldn't wait to get it open. All I could think about was map locations of towers and gates. But every word he had written was about the young girls who worked at Duffy Mott! Not a word about barbed wire and guard towers!

Instead, Heinrich wrote, "The young girls were curious about us and we were very lonely." He continued. "Soon, they were writing their names on their uniforms with lipstick and before long they were writing their names on OUR uniforms with lipstick."

Heinrich's letter went on to say that the girls taught them all how to "rock and roll" during the lunch break (I'm sure he meant 'jitterbug' but forgot the word).

"I think Nellie was in love with me," Heinrich's long awaited letter continued. But I think the real story was that his love for Nellie soon got him in big trouble because it wasn't too long after he arrived in Hamlin that Heinrich was transferred away from the canning factory to hoe tomatoes in Parma, the next town to the east. But that didn't deter Heinrich. He got a piece of paper and an envelope and wrote a letter to Nellie. Heinrich then stole a stamp (POWs couldn't use the postal system - that would be espionage) and bribed a guard to mail his letter. But ("but" #3) the letter never got to Nellie. The commandant got it and summoned Heinrich to his office. He told Heinrich that he should have known better and that he would have to be sent to Fort Niagara to do some time because there was no jail in the Hamlin camp. The commandant then told Heinrich to go back to the tomato fields to finish out the day and report to him in the evening to do the transfer paperwork.

Heinrich wrote that he'll "never forget that second visit to the commandant's office." He can still remember every word the commandant said. "Heinrich," he said, "I've been doing some thinking. I was young once, too, and I think we can take care of you better here than they can at Fort Niagara. I'm assigning you to kitchen duty."

A couple of weeks after that incident Heinrich tells me he could be seen driving a local farmer's car around the prison camp! Three days a week the farmer would come to the back door of the kitchen to collect garbage for his hogs and Heinrich would greet him with ham, eggs, and coffee. A friendship blossomed and Heinrich ended up teaching himself to drive using the farmer's car. A short while after that, with the help of

more eggs, ham, and coffee, Heinrich was driving Army trucks around the camp!

No one in Heinrich's hometown owned a car. Everyone there used mass transit.

In subsequent letters, Heinrich described to me some of driving around the camp. The twists and turns at long last finally gave me some idea about how the prison camp was laid out!

But none of that stopped Heinrich from thinking about Nellie. One night, Heinrich switched identities with a friend and took his place at the canning factory. Heinrich and Nellie met up in a storage area and were 'talking' when Heinrich spotted a guard on a catwalk high up and off to one side. "Shhhh," he whispered to Nellie. "Just stand still and don't say anything." Soon the guard turned and slowly walked away. Whew!

Later that night, as he finished out his friend's work shift on the main floor, Heinrich spotted the 'catwalk guard' coming towards him. Uh-oh, thought Heinrich. The guard stopped in front of Heinrich - looked him up and down - grinned a little as he shook his head from side to side - and then just turned and walked away.

Heinrich's letters inspired me and ever since I have tried my best to locate a "Nellie' somewhere in Hamlin history. But so far, I have not been able to come up with anything.

Heinrich is still alive, and it would give me great pleasure to be able to write to him someday soon and announce that "I have found Nellie!"

The commandant mentioning to Heinrich that there was no jail in the Hamlin prison camp brings to mind something Gottfried told me. He was talking about the behavior of the young guards compared to the behavior of the old guards. One morning as the POW crews prepared to be transported to their jobs, a young guard (no battle experience) applied a rifle butt to Gottfried's behind, telling Gottfried to move faster. Gottfried stopped in his tracks and told the other guards that he refused to go to work that day "with that guy." For that, Gottfried was put in the camp jail.

The book of rules and regulations for German prison camps required jails in all of the POW camps and "the book" was very specific about how to construct them. They were to be number nine wire enclosures using woven barnyard fencing - 18 x18' and eight feet high).[9] The jails were not supposed to contain any kind of shelter and POWs sentenced to them were given a diet of bread and water only.[10] One historical note in the Town Historian's collection says that Hamlin had such a jail when it first opened, but it was taken down early in the life of the camp. Obviously, by the time Heinrich was caught trying to contact Nellie, the jail was gone, but Gottfried got to Hamlin just in time to use it.

[9] The "barnyard fencing" used to make Hamlin's jail never left the camp. It was rolled up into two large bundles sometime after Gottfried's experience with it and stashed near the camp's 20-foot by 20-foot septic tank. When I figured out what those bundles were, I moved the bundles to the jail location Gottfried described to me - the NE corner of the compound, fairly close to Barracks #1.

[10] In Hamlin, a small tent was pitched inside the enclosure.

But Gottfried didn't suffer much. Before it got dark, Gottfried saw a rope "come flying" to the enclosure from a nearby barracks. At the end of the rope was supper - all of the courses and a container of milk! The next morning, a Duffy Mott supervisor appeared at the main gate to ask what happened to Gottfried. When he was told, the supervisor hollered for the guards to, "Get him out of there. We need him!" And Gottfried was released.[11]

Gottfried liked the seasoned Army guards best - the ones who had seen some combat. He said, "We could steal horses with them!"

His favorite story about the "old guards" started one night after stacking cases of Duffy Mott product on the railroad loading dock. The guards had figured out that the Duffy Mott inspectors only checked the inside of the trucks before they left the factory to go back to the POW camp. On this particular night, the guards stashed two cases of jam ON TOP of the truck. The inspectors went through the truck and okayed it to leave. The guards then drove the truck and POWs about 600 feet up the road and stopped at the Homestead Hotel. The guards sold the two cases of jam to the patrons at the bar and used the money to get very drunk.

The POWs became very concerned about getting the drunk guards back to camp. They didn't want the guards to be disciplined and transferred to another camp. The POWs liked them. When the crew arrived back at the camp, the POWs supported the staggering guards, two POWs to a guard. They marched in threes through the gate with the other POWs bringing up the rear pretending to be guards, marching with the guard's rifles on their shoulders. Gottfried says, "It must have worked. The same guards were there the next time they worked that shift."

Did anyone ever escape from the Hamlin POW camp? Both Heinrich and Gottfried would answer, "Why would they want to?" But 22-year-old Karl Koester did!

In November of 1945, the day was fast approaching that German prisoners would be heading for home. POW camps were already closing down from west to east across the country. Karl was part of a group recently sent to Hamlin from Fort Niagara to help with the harvest and canning. It probably wasn't Karl's first stay in Hamlin judging from his knowledge of this area and what was where.

Karl tried to talk some of the other POWs into escaping from the camp. He reminded them that as soldiers it was their duty to try to escape at every opportunity but no one in the camp would join him. He was on his own.

Karl went to work, as usual, at Duffy Mott the day of the escape. During a break he loaded up his pockets with cookies from the cafeteria, turned his coat inside out so that

[11] Gottfried lucked out twice. A short time before he came here, some canning factories and big farmers complained to the government that every time they asked for a work crew, they got a different bunch of guys. A lot of time was wasted training every new batch of workers! They asked if the rules could be changed to allow them to have the same crew all the time. After a big meeting somewhere, the rule was changed. Duffy Mott was one of the factories that got a permanent crew and Gottfried arrived here just in time to be named to that crew. By contrast, Heinrich got moved to a new camp every six months.

the large P W wouldn't show, and started hitchhiking to Rochester.

He didn't have any trouble getting a ride. And in spite of the fact that his very heavy German accent had to have easily given him away, Karl panhandled enough money to finance three days of touring Rochester in a taxi and taking in a few movies. At night he slept in a machine shop behind a house on Ridge Road in Greece (there is a McDonalds there now).

Karl finally got bored about the time he ran out of cookies and knocked on the door of the house in front of the machine shop. He told the homeowners his story (to their amazement) and asked them to call the authorities. The FBI came and took Karl Koester back to the Hamlin POW camp.

In the three days he had been gone, all of the guys he had come to Hamlin with from Fort Niagara had been sent back to Fort Niagara. The Fort's POW camp was closing, and all of its prisoners were in the process of beginning the journey back to Europe. Karl was stuck in Hamlin until the first week of January 1946 when he was moved to Pine Camp (now Camp Drum) with the Hamlin POW regulars. At Pine Camp, Karl escaped again but was captured in short order this time!

Karl eventually made it back to Germany, but he told some of the Hamlin POWs in confidence that his escape efforts were not an attempt to get back to the German Army. Like so many other German POWs, he just wanted to stay in the United States, and he knew that the Geneva Convention wouldn't let him.

Special note: Just for the heck of it, a couple of years ago, I plotted the mailing addresses of Heinrich and Gottfried on a map of Germany and discovered that they both lived within eleven miles of each other! I had already found out that both of them shared the same barracks in Hamlin AT THE SAME TIME but this too much!

Heinrich's grandson, Matthias, and I had become acquainted via email and when I told him the two old soldiers lived a few miles apart, it was too much for Matthias, too. Matthias emailed me and asked me to meet him at Niagara Falls. He was there on a business trip and wanted me to give him a crash course on the Hamlin POW camp.



Nick (left), Ed (center) and Matthias (right) (grandson to former POW Heinrich Willert).

Nick and I met Matthias at the Falls and showed him a bunch of stuff about the camp. He was impressed and said that he was on his way back to Germany and intended to arrange a reunion of Heinrich and Gottfried as soon as possible.

Three days later I got an email saying that the reunion had taken place and that I would be getting photos of the event! I also got a copy of a full-page story in a German newspaper about the reunion of "two old soldiers who had shared the same POW experience" and didn't know they were living a few miles apart.

I had the opportunity of meeting Gottfried's grandson, too. At Gottfried's request, Nick Kramer, Walt Fisher, and I plucked him from a bus tour he was on along our east coast and brought him to Hamlin for the day. I had a wonderful time showing Gottfried's grandson around the Hamlin POW camp site and the warehouse where Gottfried worked when he was at Duffy Motts.

There was another incident that was briefly recorded as an escape from the Hamlin camp. A bunch of POWs from Hamlin were working in the fields in Kendall (the next town to the west). When the truck left Kendall to take the POWs back to Hamlin, two prisoners got left behind. Both of them panicked! Trying hard not to be seen with the big P and W on their clothing, they made their way on foot back to Moscow Road as fast as they could.[12]

When they finally got back to the camp they faced the problem of the gun tower to the right of the main gate. They did not want to be shot as escapees, so they hid in the ditch. Eventually, someone happened by on a bicycle. Whew! They explained their problem to the good Samaritan who then approached the guards at the gate and explained the POW's predicament. A crisis was averted, and the camp's perfect escape record remained untarnished - until Karl Koester.

The "almost escape" of the two POWs who were left behind in Kendall did not make the newspapers, but Karl Koester was in all of the local papers. They had him down in headlines as an escaped "Nazi" but never mentioned that his motive was to remain in the United States.[13] And after becoming pen pals with two former German POWs, I felt badly that Karl Koester was called a Nazi. He was just a young, enlisted man in the German Army - like our enlisted young men. They didn't like the war any more than our guys did.

When German prisoners were captured in Europe and Africa and finally arrived here, they were first sent to the interior of the country - far from our borders - where the Nazis were sorted out from the ordinary enlisted men. After the Nazis were sorted out, the ordinary enlisted men were sent to the waiting POW camps in the eastern part of the United States where labor was in short supply. That's where Hamlin comes into the picture.

The sorting of the Nazis from the rest of the pack must have been a heck of a process but it appears to have worked quite well. Yes, the process missed a few, but those few stood out like a sore thumb. When one of the "missed" Nazis showed up, the farmers all said, "He just disappeared!"

But Heinrich told me they didn't just disappear. All of the 'good' prisoners knew what happened to them. Heinrich told me missed Nazis were "sent to West Point and were 'dealt with' there."

One of those missed Nazis showed up on a Hamlin farm. A scheduled truckload of POWs had arrived at a big farm and the farm family gathered around to get their first close-up look at a German POW. There was a Nazi on the truck, and he told all of the POWs - in German - to remain in the truck when they were ordered to get down. "Just sit here and do nothing," he told them.

Many of the farm families in Hamlin are of German descent. A grandmother, who still spoke German around her house, heard what the Nazi had told the others and

[12] All of the road signs in the area had been removed so that the enemy couldn't find their way around the towns.

[13] I recently learned that only three German POWs of the 400,000 plus sent here succeeded in avoiding being sent back after the war. One of the three became accounted for a couple of years ago. The fates of the other two are still unknown.

reported it to the guard who appeared to be in charge. He told the grandmother, "Shhhh. I'll take care of it."

The head guard raised his voice and hollered, "Men, I'm about to give the order for the Germans to jump off the truck. If anyone refuses, shoot them!" Suddenly, every one of the POWs jumped off the truck, including the Nazi. Grandma pointed out the Nazi to the guard and "the Nazi just disappeared!

There are TWO FINAL THINGS I know about the Hamlin POW camp. (1) The healing process for WWII started in the Hamlin POW camp for the German soldiers who lived there and the people living in the community surrounding the camp. Those soldiers went home to Germany with a much more accurate picture of what Americans were like than the one they were given to believe when they signed up or were drafted. The POW camp made envoys out of them. The U. S. government saw that happening in the other POW camps, too. A few weeks before the camps were to close, the government instituted crash courses in many of the camps to teach some of the more educated prisoners the fine points of American history and our political system. Those POWs were being specifically trained to "spread the word over there!"

It worked! In a recent letter, Heinrich told me, "What you did (back then) was to make ambassadors out of us. When we see things like 9/11, the demonstrations, the bombings, the shootings, stock market problems, we all cheer for you because we know the whole world needs the United States."

And the people in Hamlin - in all of western New York - didn't end up hating the Germans. They learned quickly that the Germans who were keeping their canning factories open and harvesting their crops were just ordinary people, like them, trying to survive a war.

(2) What happened in the Hamlin POW camp, and the CCC camp before, paints a picture of what we can do when the chips are down. That picture isn't commonly presented in movies or on TV. It certainly isn't being taught in our schools. CCC camps might get a line or two in a junior high history book but that's all. The topic, "POW camps in rural America," isn't even mentioned.

When I give a lecture about the Hamlin site or talk to students in a classroom, everyone is amazed that they had not heard any of my stories before. But the only way anyone is going to UNDERSTAND that very special "feeling of pride" a CCC enlistee experienced but never felt the need to express to anyone, even his family, is to visit the camp and see where the stories came from. And how we so naturally just happened to make friends with our enemies during WWII is automatically answered when you visit the site and focus on the POW history of the camp. The Hamlin CCC/POW camp must be preserved to remind everyone of a part of our heritage that can't be better saved any other way.

We - the volunteers - have made a start at saving this national treasure but there is still a lot of work that needs to be done. Most of the money put into the project so far has come from the pockets of a few volunteers. There has to be more "governmental" interest shown, SOON. In all honesty, the present administration of the Hamlin Beach State Park has done very little to further the project. The Friends of the Hamlin Beach

State Park organization have done even less. At times, both even hinder the progress of the project. The New York State Department of Historical Preservation in Albany, however, supports the project 100%. So far so good, but we have a long way to go.

ADDITIONS

Early in the clearing of the site, four guy wire anchors were found - two at the south end of the camp, one near the middle of the camp along the east property line, and one near the NE corner of the camp. Pieces of cable about one foot long were still attached to a couple of them. There is nothing in the aerial photos of the CCC camp to indicate what they were for. However, when the buried strand of barbed wire that enabled us to mark the entire fence line of the POW camp was finally discovered, the guy wire anchors suddenly made sense.

When the barbed wire fence line and the guy wire anchors were plotted on the same map of the camp (the Planting Plan for the CCC camp supplied by the Letchworth SP archives) the two guy wire anchors at the south end of camp were both found to be 40 feet from a corner post of the POW barbed wire compound. (One, 40 feet east of the SW corner and the other 40 feet west of the SE corner.) Both were on the south side of the walkway (street) that ran outside the barbed wire the entire width of the southern end of the POW camp.

Old photos show that during the CCC days, the grounds inside of the camp were kept pretty much dark (probably to facilitate sleep after a hard day's work). But when the CCC camp became a POW camp, the Army required that the grounds inside the camp be lit. (The guard towers had search lights on top but they were turned on during emergencies only.) Government issue lights at the ends of long arms extending into the compound from power poles (like the lights shown in old photos of the POW camp at Fort Niagara) were most likely put in place before the camp opened in 1944. The guy wire anchors we found and cables that ran from them were obviously used to hold the power poles upright.

When plotted on the map of the camp (the Planting Plan), the guy wire anchor along the eastern property line ended up being, within a couple of feet, equidistant from the NE and SE corners of the POW compound. U. S. Army "symmetry!" Like the anchors at the south end of the camp, this one was also outside the fence.

When plotted on the map of the camp, the guy wire anchor found at the north end of camp ended up being 40 feet west of the NE corner of the barbed wire compound. The location of the light pole it held up matched the locations of the ones at the other two corners! More symmetry!

To maintain that symmetry, there probably was a guy wire anchor 40 feet east of the NW corner of the POW camp and another midway along the western side of the POW camp. But both of those locations were extensively disturbed many times after the POW camp was dismantled. No one will ever find those guy wire anchors.

The light poles also appear to be strategically located near both the guard towers AND small "people gates"[14] into the POW compound. The "people gate" Heinrich saw used during the sit-down strike is between the light pole and the SW corner post of the compound. In the rear-view mirror of her car, Margie watched POWs come through a

[14] The "people gate" designation was invented by Heinrich to distinguish small gates from the very wide main gate.

"people gate" that was close to the light pole near the SE corner of the compound. Nick Kramer cleared the pavement that marked the position of a "people gate" between the light pole and the NE corner post of the compound. If, by some miracle, we someday find a photo of the camp, it will probably show a "people gate" at the NW corner of the compound. Symmetry!

If there was a light pole at the middle of the western side of the compound (and I think there was), another "people gate" was probably nearby. That gate would have been used by the guards residing in the converted CCC Education Building. To maintain symmetry, would there have been a "people gate" near the light pole on the eastern side of the compound? I can't think of a reason to have one there. The neighbor's property begins just a couple of feet or so east of the guy wire anchor! The neighbors would not need an entrance into the POW compound!

BUT, there is a strange wooden post - too small in diameter and short to be a power pole - a few feet to the south of the guy wire anchor on the eastern side of the camp. And it is on POW camp property! But what was it for? The surveyor's summary done in 2008-09 mentions it but makes no attempt to identify it. We'll just have to wait for that "miracle photo" to appear!

TO FUTURE RESEARCHERS

As the title of this work indicates, this is all I know about the CCC camp and the POW camp, off the top of my head. It is the sum of what I pass along to audiences. I never get to say all of this at one gathering and simply deliver different parts of what is written here at each event. I tailor my talks to each audience.

However, be advised that I have many hundreds of photos taken during the clearing of the camp, many old, unpublished 1930s photos taken at our camp and other camps, letters, discharge papers and essays provided by families of enrollees in the Hamlin CCC camp, enlarged copies of many of Mary Smith's CCC/POW photos, blueprints of most of the buildings that stood in our CCC camp, government records and information from Washington concerning our CCC camp and our POW camp, an extensive collection of overhead projection slides, records from the NYS Park system, early maps of the entire area showing what used to be there and where the Park is now, three journals detailing the clearing of the site from 2008 to 2017, Heinrich's letters to me, Gottfried's emails, letters, booklets, and artifacts, the entire Jimmy Giancaterin's collection (in a fireproof container), a small library of books about the CCC program and POW camps in the US, and much, much more.

I have given instructions that my collections are NOT to be sent to Albany, NOT to be turned over to the Friends of the State Park, and NOT to be stored in the State Park offices or some makeshift museum. It is my intention that the collections be put in an appropriate facility on or near the actual Hamlin CCC/POW site - preferably a "visitor center" in the old farmhouse at 968 Moscow Road. I am sure my heirs will do their best to carry out my wishes. If all else fails, I would suggest that the Town of Hamlin Historian be asked to help with the care of the collection.

Ed Evans - January 2018