Hamlin Beach State Park Shelter #3[1]

Franklin Roosevelt dreamed up a program 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. His program was called the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC).

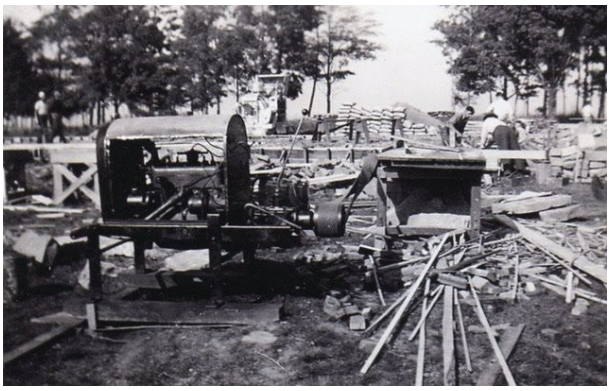
First on his list was the nation's forests. U.S. paper mills were clear-cutting huge forests but weren't replacing the trees. Plywood had been invented, and lumber companies were also clear-cutting forests to meet the demand and were not replacing the trees. The country was also plagued with forest fires (fires 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.

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!

Buildings, drinking fountains, bridges and walls were built in Hamlin Beach SP out of locally quarried Medina sandstone.

An example of one of the buildings completed by the CCC is Shelter #3. It was started in 1937 and finished in 1938 as shown in the following three pictures.[2]

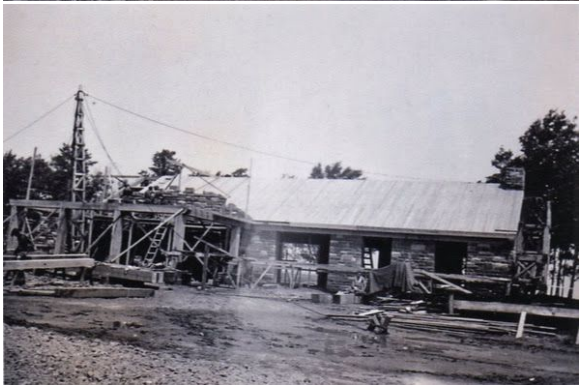


The gasoline engine in this photo is identical to the one that powered the CCC sawmill.

[1] Written by Marleen Cain with information shared by Ed Evans verbally and in his papers.

[2] The three construction pictures are part of CCC Graduate Peter Badura's collection. His family in Rochester sent the pictures to Ed Evans a few years ago.





Mary Smith was undoubtably the best Town Historian the Town ever had, and she was in the process of organizing a reunion of 40 or so CCC enlistees who had worked in the Hamlin CCC Camp. It was, in fact, her second such reunion, and she wanted this one to be special!

The reunion started at a cleared area where the CCC camp had been. A temporary flagpole was erected with a bronze plaque attached and a local Boy Scout Troup was elected to raise the flag.

Then the entire crowd (about 100 people) drove to the Medina Sandstone shelter the CCC had built at Area #3 of Hamlin Beach State Park. Everyone munched on refreshments and chatted about all the "boys" had accomplished at the Park back in the 1930s.

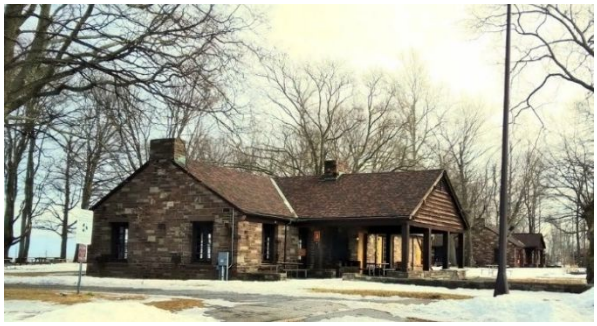
Shelter #3 is a little wider, and a little less long than the Mess Hall at the CCC camp. Tables built by the CCC are still inside (also in Shelter #1). Several still have the numbers later hand-painted on them to identify the POW's assigned tables.

When Matthias Heinicke, grandson to Hamlin POW Heinrich Willert, toured Hamlin Beach, he sat at one of the numbered tables that his grandfather may have sat at.

In addition to Shelter #3, the CCC completed the stonework on Shelter #1 (the rest of the building later completed by non-CCC workers), built the snack bar, a small building for storing chemicals for the leach fields, the rest area at Area #2, and a wooden round building (that was later taken down). The Bath House was built by a non-CCC contractor.

Here are pictures of Shelter #3 as it stands today, March 2025, over 80 years later. It is a testament to the quality of the work done by the CCC and the lasting impact of their projects.





Note the damages. Vanals damaged the building to gain entry in January 2025.