Camp Tulelake

Most of us are acquainted with the Japanese Internment Center at Newell, California where as many as 18,000 people of Japanese descent, many of them U. S. citizens, were confined during the Second World War. It may not be as widely known that within a few miles were several Civilian Conservation Corp. (CCC) camps. If the incarceration of American citizens without due process of law was a low point in our nation’s history, surely the creation of the CCC during the dark days of the Great Depression was a high point. Few government programs, either before or since have met with such success as that of the CCC. We had examples of both the good and the bad right here in the Klamath Basin.

In this issue of The Trumpeter we bring our readers a brief history of one of those CCC camps. Not that this camp was more important or its story any more interesting than the others. We have selected Camp Tulelake for the simple reason that there is more information available on the subject and more importantly because several of the original structure of this camp are still in existence. Few, if any camp sites retain as much of their original appearance as Camp Tulelake.

Camp Tulelake was located five miles west of the town of Tulelake near Sheepy Ridge. It is located on the west side of Hill Road, about two miles south of State Line Road. What makes this old camp so unique is that after 60 years use, and “dis-use” several of the original camp buildings are still standing. They have survived through the years and up to the present time. Although the camp is not open to the public it can easily be seen from Hill Road and there is a small parking area where one may pull off the highway and view the remains of the old camp. The only remaining ingredient needed to bring back a picture out of the past is a little imagination. -Editor
Buildings at Camp Tulelake as they appeared in 2005  Photo by Lynn Jeche

SOME CCC CAMPS IN AND AROUND THE KLAMATH BASIN

FREMONT NATIONAL FOREST
Camp Bly
Camp Cliff Springs
Camp Dog Lake
Camp Ingram
Camp Pikes Crossing
Camp Silver Creek
Camp Strawberry Mtn.
Camp Swede Hamin
Camp Thomas Creek

WINEMA NATIONAL FOREST
Camp Lake of the Woods

OREGON DIVISION OF FORESTRY
Camp Horsefly
Camp Fort Klamath Fish Hatchery

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Camp Hart Mountain
Camp Clear Lake
Camp Tule Lake
Camp Board Corrals
Camp Charles Sheldon

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION
Camp Klamath
Camp Tulelake

DIVISION OF GRAZING
Camp Bonanza

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Camp Annie Springs
Camp Lost Creek
Camp Wineglass
Camp Lava Beds

KLAMATH NATIONAL FOREST
Camp Goosenest
Camp Leaf

MODOC NATIONAL FOREST
Camp Cantrall Mill
Camp Crane Creek
Camp Hackamore
Camp Juniper Flats
Camp Long-Bell
Camp White Horse
It really all began back in March of 1933 when President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed into law, the legislation creating the Civilian Conservation Corp. (CCC). Like the rest of the world, America was caught up in the throes of the Great Depression. Unemployment was high and money was scarce. Hardly a promising outlook for the country's youth who were looking for jobs were there were none. This law creating the CCC was enacted to provide employment and vocational training for the country's unemployed young men. Enrollment was open to young men between the ages of 18 and 25, who were unmarried and who's families were on relief. Enrollees were to be engaged in useful work in connection with the conservation and development of the natural resources throughout the nation. The U.S. Army was put in charge of camp construction, transportation, clothing, and feeding the enrollees. The total number of participants nationwide peaked in 1935 when 502,000 young men were enrolled nationwide, mostly from eastern cities. Camp Tulelake was just one of the more than 4,000 such camps established throughout the 48 states.

As CCC camps went, Camp Tulelake was of about average in size. It was composed of 23 major buildings, plus a number of smaller structures. Listed among the larger buildings was an administrative office, mess hall, recreation room, school and of course, several barracks in which the enrollees were housed. In the center of the ground
was the flag pole from which Old Glory proudly waved.

During the years from 1935 until 1942 the enrollees took on several major projects designed to enhance the wildlife refuge. Foremost was the raising of the dam and dikes at Clear Lake reservoir in order to increase its water holding capacity. This project was completed in 1938-39 after which the workers returned to the refuge headquarters where they built a new administration building, a supervisor’s residence, several rock walls in addition to a large number of smaller projects, such as the rock, overlook, perched high on the hillside behind the present refuge headquarters. It is noteworthy that a number of projects built by the CCC over 60 years ago are still in use today.

What is immeasurable, but in no ways of less importance is the change for good brought about in the lives of the individual young men who were involved. Many stayed on or returned later to live in the local areas where they had served in the CCC. Most went on to serve in the armed forces during World War Two.

For their labors with the CCC each enrollee was paid $1.00 per day. ($30.00 per month) with the understanding that $25.00 was to be withheld and sent home, leaving a mere $5.00 for the worker’s use. At 1930s prices that was probably
considering that their clothing, food and lodging were all provided by the government.

Camp Tulelake had a colorful, if short, history. It was built in 1935 by the U.S. Army for the use of the CCC, but by the time it was closed down for the last time in 1946 it had been used by several other government entities. The land on which the camp was built was originally acquired from the U.S. Biological Survey (Now the US Fish and Wildlife Service) (USF&WS). It was retained for CCC use until the camp was closed down in 1942. By that time the country was at War, and the property was returned to the USF&W. But not for long.

In less than a year the Army re-appropriated the property for use as an internment camp for Japanese-American citizens, akin to the camp at Newell. It was used as a temporary center for the so called Japanese "troublemakers" from the nearby Tule Lake Internment Center. As we shall see it was also used for other purposes. It was finally closed down in 1946 and the property returned to USF&W. Other than for random storage purposes by the USF&W, it has not been used since.

Two such CCC camps were assigned to the Klamath Reclamation Project in 1935, Camp Klamath and Camp Tulelake. The latter was placed near the lower end of the project, five miles west of the town of Tulelake. Construction of the camp began in June 1935. Additional structures were added as needed and the camp was not actually completed until 1938.

The first CCC personnel to arrive at the new camp was a group of 22 enrollees from Company 2514 who were brought in to assist the crew of local contractors in the construction of the camp. Initially the facility consisted of 23 major buildings, plus an assortment of auxiliary structures.

The first contingent of CCC men arrived in October 1935. Then, after only six months the camp was closed down and remained idle until October 1936 when it was again activated. Early in 1943 a number of people of Japanese descent were moved to Camp Tulelake by the WRA from the nearby Tule Lake Relocation Center at Newell. These were individuals who were considered trouble makers and were thought to be of "questionable loyalty." It is not clear just when the last of these people
were removed from the camp, but they were obviously gone by May of 1944, for at that time 150 Italian prisoners of war (POW) were brought in to refurbish the camp in preparation for its next inhabitants. The Italians did not actually stay in the camp buildings but rather pitched their tents in a fenced off area within the city park in Tulelake.

The Italians finished their work in June and shortly thereafter a group of 250 German POWs were moved in. By October the number of German POWs at Camp had increased to 800. Because of the war the country was experiencing a serious labor shortage and local farmers were having trouble finding enough workers to harvest their crops and were glad to get help anywhere they could find it. The German POWs willingly worked in the fields and were said to be glad to have something to do to relieve the boredom of sitting in camp.

Soon after hostilities ended in 1945, the camp was closed down and the following year (1946) the property was returned to the USF&W who used it for storage, & as a paint shop.

"First we are giving chance of employment to one-quarter million of the unemployed, especially the young men who have dependents, to go into the forestry and flood prevention work. This is a big task because it means feeding, clothing and caring for nearly twice as many men as we have in the regular army itself. In creating this civilian conservation corps we are killing two birds with one stone. We are clearly enhancing the value of our resources and second, we are relieving an appreciable amount of actual distress." Franklin Delano Roosevelt, May 7, 1933
Educational-Recreational Program at South-end CCC Camps Proves Successful

An educational program has been advanced successfully at the CCC camps at Tulelake and Merrill, on the Klamath Reclamation project, according to a report prepared by Anthony R. Manno, regional clerk. Manno said that a “surprisingly high percentage” of the enrollees at the camps were illiterates when they began their CCC service. To help these boys, an educational committee planned an educational program to be coordinated into the activities of the camps. Available personnel was used for instruction of classes in reading, writing, spelling, history, geography, journalism, CCC administration, landscape gardening, photography, auto and diesel mechanics, truck driving and mess management.

Numerous correspondence and reading courses were given the men by the California educational Department, Oregon State Library and other state institutions. Manno said it was found the enrollees did not gain much from correspondence courses unless they were tied in with the camp schools and the work supervised by the education advisers.

Classes in first-aid training were given continuously at the camps. At both camps safety meetings were held simultaneously or in conjunction with first-aid classes.

Moral and spiritual welfare of the enrollees was the special responsibility of Chaplain C. R. Pond. Religious services for both Catholic and protestant denominations were held in camp from time to time through his efforts. Preachers from various churches at Klamath Falls visited the camps to advise the men. On Sunday mornings, trucks took the men to Merrill to attend services at their respective churches.

In the field of sports, Manno reported, both camps captured their share of honors in competition within the district. The baseball teams offered a chance for enrollees to tour the camps of the district. Swimming, boxing, wrestling, volleyball and tennis are a few of the sports in which the troopers indulged. Billiards, Pit, ping-pong, chess and checkers games were encourage for indoor diversion. The camp libraries have also proved popular.

*Klamath Herald*, December 17, 1937.
Boys signing up for the CCC.

THE LOGISTICS

The logistics involved in moving such a large group of people around the country was enormous. A large number of the enrollees came from the eastern states and had to be transported across the nation to the various camps, scattered throughout the western states. Then six months later, when their term of service was over they had to be hauled back across the country to their homes. Because of the large number of people involved, a large part of the CCC troupes were moved in special trains. This was just the kind of movement the nation’s railroads were good at and for the most part they seem to have pulled it off without any serious glitches.

An item appearing in the December 16, 1937 issue of the Klamath News provides a good example of what was involved.

"Nearly four hundred Three-C enrollees from Lava Beds Monuments Camp and from Camp Tulelake left by train from Klamath Falls Tuesday night en route to homes scattered over the southwest and the east after being disbanded to prepare for a new contingent expected to arrive about December 20.

Company #3866 of the 8th Corps located at Camp Tulelake went back to Bastrop, Texas, accompanied by their commanding officer, Lieutenant Needham. Replacements for this company will come from Kentucky, Alabama, Georgia and other states in the south in the 5th corps area.

The men who entrained at Klamath Falls prepare their own meals en route home, have a physician in attendance, and as much as possible follow camp routine. About 375 men were involved."
Meetings are held the 4th Thursday of the month — with some exceptions. See schedule or call 883-4208. We meet at the Klamath County Museum meeting room, 1451 Main St., Klamath Falls, Spring Street entrance. For further information call the museum.

**2006 MEETINGS**

**MARCH 23 - 2 PM**
**RAILS TO TRAILS**

**APRIL 27 - 7 PM**
**WEBBER LOG CABIN**

**MAY 25 - 7 PM**
**TO BE ANNOUNCED**

**JUNE - TOUR**
**TO BE ANNOUNCED**

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**Membership information**

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Make your dues payable to:

**KLAMATH COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

and mail to or drop off at:

Klamath County Museum, 1451 Main Street,
Klamath Falls, OR 97601

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**NOTICE:** It was decided by the members at the last meeting that due to rising costs of publication of this newsletter that a raise in the dues for ‘Individuals’ would be appropriate. Effective January 1, 2007 the dues will increase to $10.00 per individual.

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**Board Members**

John Fortune, President
Paul Fitzhugh, Vice President
Susan Rambo, Secretary
Avis Kielmeier, Treasurer
Bob Baker, Carol Mattos,
Doris Peters
## Klamath County Historical Society

### Annual Financial Report

#### 2005

**Beginning balance 1 January 2005** $6,167.93

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| **Total Expenses**          | (5,511.81) |

**Ending balance 31 December 2005** $6,054.75

**VKM Investment** $12,948.93
A Treasure Found

I’m constantly amazed at how many historical treasures lie hidden away inside our museums. I’m also amazed at how the advent of relatively inexpensive computers combined with the Internet will forever change our ability to use these historical gems.

The Klamath County Museum is benefiting from great work being done by several volunteers who are teaming up with our staff to inventory our holdings and make information available online.

Historical Society member Carol Mattos recently asked to be assigned a project of some kind inside the Klamath County Museum. Curator Lynn Jeche suggested she go through a set of cabinets with unknown contents in the corner of our research library.

Carol found a variety of odds and ends - scrapbooks and such. Among them was one particular prize: a record book compiled by the Pioneer Society of the Klamath Basin. Inside were the names of dozens of pioneers, listed with the year they settled in or were born in the Klamath Basin.

Many pioneers also had brief biographical sketches included. A section on Silas W. Kilgore, for instance, relates how he helped build the first bridge across Link River at George Nurse’s town site of Linkville.

Rufus S. Moore, who arrived in the area in 1877, remembered coming to Linkville “without a cent, owing $2 on stage fare.” Henrietta F. Cranston came to Linkville with her family in 1872. The family drove 150 head of cattle over the Military Road, making the trip from Monroe in 18 days. She later married H. F. Shallow and, after his death, Frederick Melhase.

Addie Walker related how she traveled by freight wagon from Ashland to Sprague River, a trip that took 6 days. Snow began falling on the day of their arrival on Nov. 3, 1879. She said she didn’t see bare ground again until the following April.

As one reads these accounts, it’s not hard to imagine how thrilled some genealogist will be some day to find these pages that reside in our museum. When they do, they’ll be able to thank Carol Mattos, who found the book, and our front desk receptionist Nancy Sieverts, who indexed the names on her computer.

Thanks to all our volunteers who are working on similar projects. If you’re interested in volunteering on a project great or small, there’s always room for more.

Todd Kepple, Museum Manager