

Morrow Mountain State Park

The section below about Morrow Mt. State Park I quoted in full, without permission, from Harley E. Jolley's "***That Magnificent Army of Youth and Peace***" *The Civilian Conservation Corps in North Carolina, 1933 - 1942*. Published by - Office of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Raleigh, 2007, pages 90, 91 and 92. (John Young)

This park, located in Stanly County between Albemarle and Badin, astride an ancient mountain range bearing the Indian name "Uwharrie," is a resounding testimony to what a handful of dedicated citizens, a few philanthropists, a small army of politicians, and a large force of WPA and CCC workers could achieve. James McKnight Morrow, for whom the mountain is named, was a prominent citizen of Albemarle who is generally credited with being the first to envision that the area held the potential for becoming a fine public recreation space. During the 1920s Morrow and a small group of citizens, including A.C. Honeycutt, publisher of the *Stanly News and Press* (Albemarle), labored assiduously to secure local and state support for establishing a park there. But the arrival of the Great Depression halted the movement, which then lay dormant for years until the creation of the CCC and the accompanying cooperative program between the National Park Service and state governments to develop state parks brought it out of slumber. Indeed, a park at Morrow Mountain was just the sort of project visualized when the cooperative program was conceived.

A key step in the process was taken when Morrow and others secured a visit to the area by L.A. Sharp, regional inspector of state parks for the National Park Service, on February 8, 1935. Impressed by the sincerity of the local boosters and by the recreational potential of the site, Sharp declared that if the proper cooperation of local citizens could be secured, there was strong justification for creating a park. In a follow-up meeting, Morrow pledged to donate from seven hundred to one thousand acres of land, and others agreed to contribute considerable acreage. Thereupon, Sharp said that he would officially recommend creation of the park, provided enough land could actually be secured. He estimated that the proposed facility would cost between \$200,000 and \$300,000.¹ Then, in late February 1935, Sharp approved the project, more land was acquired, and the North Carolina General Assembly authorized Stanly County to issue \$20,000 in bonds to purchase additional land for the park.

In April 1935 Stanly County authorities delivered to J.S. Holmes, state forester, deeds to 2,500 acres, and all necessary applications were filed, whereupon the federal government approved the park program. On May 14, 1935, President Roosevelt gave his approval for a CCC camp to be assigned to Stanly County for state park work. (Behind the scenes, U.S. Rep. Robert L. Doughton had been pressing unceasingly for establishment of the camp; his efforts were rewarded not only by assignment of the camp but also by having the unit named "Camp Doughton" in his honor.)² So it was that CCC Camp NC SP-3, Company 3421, came to Morrow Mountain State Park, beginning with the arrival on July 8, 1935, of an advance cadre of twenty-five men previously assigned to Camp NC SCS-2, Company 437, Polkton, and the subsequent

¹ Stanly News and Press, August 16, 1940.

² Salisbury Post, March 31, 1935; Official Annual, CCC, District A, Fourth Corps Area, 1936, 87.

arrival on August 20, 1935, of 175 new enrollees from Florida. With the two hundred enrollees at the site, the real work on Morrow Mountain began:

Roads were constructed and repaired. Fire hazards were reduced by clearing the mountain of brush, dead trees and logs. Literally acres of mountainside were cleared of dead mountain laurel, and as the work advanced one could see and appreciate the change that was taking place. Dry brush, dead trees and decaying logs were giving place to clean ground and a fresh green undergrowth of mountain laurel. Rock was quarried for use in the development of the park - thousands of cubic yards of rock, quarried and transported to places where rock was needed.³

In June 1940, a local newspaper summarized the accomplishments of the CCC camp assigned to the park:

1. Five miles of graded rock road, running through the area to the summit.
2. Landscaping and erecting stone retaining walls throughout the park.
3. Building a semi-enclosed picnic pavilion with open fireplace and grill.
4. Constructing native stone comfort stations.
5. Laying 9,000 feet of water mains.
6. Building fifteen miles of woodland trails.
7. Construction of a 1,500,000 gallon water reservoir.⁴

Nearly forty years later, a comprehensive plan for the park reviewed the early contributions made by the CCC enrollees:

During 1939 and 1940 these workers completed two entire water systems (one for the swimming pool, another for the other park buildings and use area), the family picnicking areas (including the picnic shelter, toilet buildings, septic system, and picnic tables), a 100 car parking area at the lodge, and concession buildings at the swimming pool. By 1942, before the CCC camp disbanded, two ranger residences, a part of maintenance service area (a garage, tool house, and shop), a barn, a barracks for summer employees, and enlargement of the parking area on the top of Morrow Mountain had been completed.⁵

To accomplish those tasks, three CCC companies, including one composed of war veterans, are credited with serving at Morrow Mountain at one time or another from July 1935 to April 1942. In commemorating their work and that of others, a reporter described in 1940 what visitors to the park would see as a result of their labors: "lovely mountain vistas, overlooking lakes and rivers, a democratic spot, designed for spending leisure time joyfully."⁶

³ Official Annual, CCC, District A, Fourth Corps Area, 1936, 87.

⁴ Stanly News and Press, August 16, 1940.

⁵ Department of Natural Resources and Community Development, Master Planning Unit, Morrow Mountain State Park Plan, February 1979, 3, Department of Conservation and Development, Parks (State and National), Box 16, State Archives.

⁶ Stanly News and Press, August 16, 1940.

[Comments by John D. Young: In the Appendixes, page 142, three State-Park CCC Camps are listed for Albemarle/Stanly 1. NC SP-3 3421, Doughton; 2. NC SP-4 1499 Doughton (two different camps, perhaps operated at different dates located downtown Albemarle); 3. NC SP-8 1499, name of camp not recorded, (this could be the camp that was located at Morrow Mountain or perhaps camps NC SP-4 and NC SP-8 were located at Morrow Mountain - more information is needed.)]