

Redvale CCC Camp

Introduction

Kristie Arrington; BLM Archaeologist: The first time I saw this site was in the late 1970's and at that time I didn't know what I was looking at but I knew there was a CCC camp out here.

John Horn; Alpine Archaeology: CCC camps are really an important part of our history, a lot of people have relatives and family that were involved with the CCC and their activities and feel a lot of pride for having done that.

Ruth Lambert; Archaeologist, San Juan Mountains Association: This interests me tremendously because it's something a large segment of our population was involved in and was really a sign of their times and a result of their times.

John Horn: It's unfortunate these camps were really insubstantial and we don't have many that have survived.

Ruth Lambert: What must life had been like for these young men who were far from home and in a new system which was fairly disciplined here at the camp? That interests me very much.

Ruth Lambert Interview

Ruth Lambert; San Juan Mountains Association, Archaeologist: I think there is a tremendous potential to learn a lot from this camp from the archaeology and historical information. I hope that others will find it just as interesting.

Ruth Lambert: The camp originated in June and July of 1935. The camp was populated with 187 workers. The projects they completed while they were here included building a number of roadways which were called truck-trails at the time of the CCC and it was mainly to move cattle and sheep between various locations in valleys and to distribution points.

Ruth Lambert: The camp operated under the department of the Army until January of 1936 when they ran out of army people and they had a retired Navy commander who came and ran the camp. His name was LeBarron and he was from Long Beach, California. To commemorate his service time in the Navy he had the workers construct two Navy anchors. They are at the entrance to the camp where you walk up to the flag pole which is a parade area and pretty regular in layout for CCC camps except that we now have these two unique Navy anchors.

Ruth Lambert: Personally I'm very interested in finding out not only what was here in the way of structures and remains but more about how the camp operated. What benefit could the workers provide to their families in terms of money they could send home? What was their life like as young men?

Ruth Lambert: Another goal of the project is to install interpretive signage so that people who visit can learn about the camp; included within that is some site etiquette material about what you should and should not do on the site.

Ruth Lambert: We have received partnership funding from the BLM and the State Historical Fund in Colorado along with in-kind funding from the San Juan Mountains Association. We have combined the use of professional archaeologists with trained volunteers to work on the site. Part of the methodology is not only recording and documenting the camp but also involving the public in the process so they are a part of the preservation of their resource.

Ruth Lambert: I think the timing for our work here is really great because this is the seventy-fifth anniversary of the CCC camp. I think that in many areas many folks are remembering the work that they did and that is a great thing.

Kristie Arrington Interview

Kristie Arrington; BLM Archaeologist: The first time I saw this site was in the late 1970's and at that time I didn't know what I was looking at but I knew there was a CCC camp out here. I was really struck by the size and complexity of the camp. I had no idea that there were that many features and that the alignments and some of the landscape features like the anchors and flower beds were so meticulously constructed. It's very impressive.

Kristie Arrington: I got assigned early on the task of doing a detailed map of two unique landscape features which are rock outlines of two big anchors that appeared to be in front of the administration building in the central courtyard. As far as I know in my readings and research about the CCC they are unique in being the only features of that nature at a CCC camp.

Kristie Arrington: It appeared at first that a lot of the stones had been removed for recent fire pits. The first anchor that I mapped that was indeed the case, there was a big fire pit nearby and people had pulled the stones out of the ground to build the fire pit. Basically, one half of that anchor is no longer visible. The second anchor appeared to have the same thing happen to it, but as I was putting pin-flags in the ground I did some probing under the surface and was able to find all of the stones that were shallowly buried. The second anchor is totally complete, there has not been any stones removed.

Kristie Arrington: The area gets a lot of recreational use, particularly hunting. It's been the gem of a campsite for decades. All the fire pits that can be found around the site use stones from the camp alignments and foundations. It will continue to deteriorate unless visitors are educated.

Kristie Arrington: I think our evaluation will show that there is a significant number of features and data that still exists at this site that will make it eligible to the National Register, in particular because of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the CCC. I think this site will make a big contribution to our understanding of the workings of the CCC. Once that happens I think the BLM will take a look at how we can better manage the site to preserve what is left.

John Horn Interview

John Horn; Alpine Archaeology: We always look toward preservation; in this case we don't have structures to preserve but we do have a landscape that can be interpreted so that people can actually visualize what was here on the site. The flagpole area with the anchors is very interesting and I think a focal point of the site that can be easily interpreted. I think a lot of people would be surprised at how many people were here for that amount of time, and yet you can see very little evidence of that.

John Horn: I'm hoping to do at least the base documentation of the site as far as identifying different places that were used, the bunk house the mess house those sort of things.

John Horn: We knew that the site was going to be pretty complex. Until you are actually on the site you don't know how complex it is going to be. We knew that it was going to be large and that there would be a lot of features to look at. We have since then discovered that there are a lot more features.

John Horn: Probably the biggest challenge is actually identifying the structural locations. We have the photographs that help to give us an idea of where those structures are but to actually find physical evidence of those structures; steps, corners of buildings, foundations that you typically see on other historic sites we don't see those on this site. We use pin-flags to help us visualize what we are actually seeing on the ground. Especially with these alignments of trails and fence posts it helps us visualize where these alignments are so we can hopefully get a sense of their size and dimensions.

John Horn: What you typically find is that you have artifacts surrounding those buildings and the places where the buildings were don't have the artifacts. In this case we don't have good foundations to show us where the structures were so you look for the artifacts but you also look for the places without artifacts. A lot of times those places without artifacts are where the structure stood. In that case the negative space tells you where the buildings were rather than seeing the structural remains.

John Horn: We know they had a program of making sure the camp was clean and that there was not a lot of trash disposed of. Still there are artifacts. What we are mostly seeing is coal slag from the stoves, window glass, nails from the construction. We are not seeing a lot of personal items or domestic items on the ground because largely, I think, those items were picked up. Typically at CCC camps you have a sizeable dump located off site for hygienic reasons. The dump here is evidently quite large and complex.

John Horn: CCC camps are really an important part of our history, a lot of people have relatives and family that were involved with the CCC and their activities and they feel a lot of pride for having done that. It's unfortunate that these camps were pretty insubstantial and we don't have many that have survived.