

SPECIAL PLACES

by Norman L. Hesseldahl

Thousands of visitors to the Oregon Coast are familiar with Tillicum Beach. This unique campground, with its "front row" of campsites built just above the high-water mark, has been a popular recreation site for over thirty years.

What most campers don't know is that just inland from Tillicum Campground, just across Highway 101, lies another kind of facility; one with a longer history. A Special Place that has been home, sanctuary and change agent in the lives of thousands of young people over the years.

Angell Camp is presently a Job Corps center, but in 1933 when President Roosevelt and Congress created the Civilian Conservation Corps as part of the New Deal, the site was just a parcel of undeveloped forest land along the Oregon Coast. In fact, it wasn't even part of the Siuslaw National Forest - the land was owned by a private timber company.

The CCC was created to provide food, shelter, work and income for unemployed young men who were unmarried and between 17 and 23 years of age. With quotas established for each state, the program authorized 87 CCC camps in Oregon, with 65 of these camps to be set up on the National Forests.

One of these camps was established near the present day Cape Perpetua Visitor Center. The original tent camp, which was set up in 1933, occupied the north bank of Cape Creek, in the area now occupied by the campground. While living in the tents, the young men began construction of a permanent camp across the creek.

In 1936, the camp at Cape Creek became a Resettlement Administration Camp, and was headquarters for a thousand men. The CCC activities were apparently

transferred to "side camps", which were established in 1937. Seven side camps were set up. One of these was Camp Angell - named after either Representative Homer Angell or Albert G. Angell, a long-time Forest Service employee.

Camp Angell continued as a side camp (the seven camps together housed about 200 men) until 1941. While it is well known that CCC enrollees performed a wide variety of natural resource jobs such as tree planting, trail construction and building construction, there also was a strong personal development emphasis in the program.

By November 1934, only a year after the camp's establishment, the Cape Creek facility had an aggressive education program in place, under the direction of Loris C. Oglesby, company educational advisor. Courses were offered in English, mathematics, liberal arts, trades, vocational work and first aid. Guest lecturers came from the university at Eugene and the college at Corvallis. In addition, educational motion pictures were shown once a week.

Since the plan was for some sort of educational work for every man, we can assume that the residents at Camp Angell and the other side camps also participated in the classes.

In 1941 it was decided to establish more permanent facilities for the CCC program in the area, and Camp Angell was selected as the site. The camp became the headquarters site for Company 5436 of the Civilian Conservation Corps, Lt. E. L. Burchell commanding. The company transferred to Angell from Tillamook in July, 1941. By November 1 the site housed 200 men in what the Waldport Tribune called "new and attractive buildings with modern conveniences," a thinly-veiled criticism of the indoor plumbing featured in the new barracks buildings.

Ironically, the move to Camp Angell was completed during the second week of December, 1941 - a week whose events triggered the demise of the CCC's. Within days, the war began to draw away enrollees.

By 1942 Camp Angell stood idle.

But the war generated many problems, and Camp Angell provided a solution to one of them - Conscientious Objectors.

While some 50,000 CO's (as they became known) served as medics in the armed forces during World War II, approximately 13,000 CO's refused to have any association with the war effort. The question of what to do with these people was resolved by the creation of a series of Conscientious Objector camps.

In 1942 an organization called the National Council for Religious Conscientious Objectors (NCRCO) was established, and as CCC camps were closed down, the NCRCO acquired many of them for Public Service Camps. Camp Angell met the necessary criteria and on October 24, 1942, it reopened as one of the earliest CO camps. Called Camp 56 by the NCRCO, the CO's housed in the camp heard the Forest Service staff call it Camp Angell, and soon they had adopted the name too, but dropped off the final "l".

The work objective for the Conscientious Objectors at Camp "Angel" was to continue the natural resource work done by the CCC. Which they did. Each enrollee was expected to work a 51-54 hour week on "project" work. But like the CCC men before them, the Conscientious Objectors soon began to implement educational and special interest programs to supplement their lives.

A well-educated and highly intellectual group, the CO's at Camp Angel began to spend their free time studying Spanish, German, auto mechanics and psychology. There was a library and reading room, and the men pursued all kinds of intellectual activities, many of them of a pacifistic nature. At one time, Camp Angel was the source of no less than three newsletters. Its fine arts group is today regarded as the forerunner of the Bay Area Poets (otherwise known as the San Francisco Renaissance), and the Interplayers, one of the leading postwar theatre groups in San Francisco, also started at Camp Angel.

With the end of World War II, there was no need for Conscientious Objector camps, and in 1946 activities at Camp Angel ceased. For the next 14 years the camp did yeoman duty as an equipment storage site and dump.

In 1960 the site was used briefly to house the District Ranger and staff for the newly created Alsea Ranger District. But the site did not begin to really hum again until 1965.

In April of that year the Forest Service opened the Angell Job Corps Center. The Forest Service was back, and so was the second "l" in the name, but more importantly, so was the concept of involving young people in a combination of natural resource work and self improvement.

The original contingent of 43 students grew within months to a population of 110. The young men spent their working hours building and maintaining campgrounds along the Oregon Coast, and they also constructed a new headquarters building for the Alsea Ranger District just outside the town of Alsea.

Spared the world events which impacted the CCC's, Job Corps and Camp Angell have had 25 years to mature and grow.

In 1975, Angell became the first of 18 Forest Service-administered Job Corps centers to go coed. Today, the campus is home to 220 young men and women. The center offers academic training, vocational training, work experience, counseling, recreation, and complete support in an around-the-clock, around-the-calendar operation.

"Our program is designed to help young people who haven't had a lot of successes in their lives," explains Center Director Walt Casto. "Most of the young people here haven't finished high school, and they have learned first hand how hard it is out in the world. They made a decision to change their lives, and they enrolled in Job Corps to get some help. Our job is to provide

a positive learning environment in which they can grow and learn how to make responsible choices in life and work."

Like the CCC's and CO's before them, Job Corps students at Camp Angell are sometimes involved with the Forest Service and our natural resource activities. Although the budget for Angell comes from the Department of Labor, the Job Corps Center is one of 18 administered by the Forest Service, and Angell is regarded as a sub-unit of the Siuslaw National Forest. But the program is far more sophisticated than a simple forest work regimen. Enrollees spend one week learning academic matters, the next week learning vocational skills, and only students enrolled in the forestry program ever spend any time working in the woods.

At the end of the program at Camp Angell, the student will have earned a high school diploma or GED equivalent, a driver's license, a First Aid and CPR certificate, and certification in a trade. In fact, graduates can qualify for union apprentice programs in automotive mechanics, carpentry, culinary arts, bricklaying, painting or welding. Training is also available in forestry or clerical curriculums.

One measure of the program's success is its placement rate. Currently, over 90% of all students move right into a job when they leave the center.

"Job Corps works," Casto always says, "and so do the students."

And therein lies the secret I think. Unchanged from the days of the CCC's and the CO's, the success of the Job Corps program at Camp Angell is built around hard work, training, and self-improvement.

Camp Angell celebrates its 25th anniversary as a Job Corps center on April 28. In that quarter-century, over 10,000 young people have passed through the gates. Graduates have gone on to successful careers in a wide variety of fields - among their number are PhD's, businessmen (and women), artisans,

journeymen and masters in many different crafts, and valued employees in businesses and government agencies.

Visitors to the Oregon Coast may be more attracted to the surf at Tillicum Beach than to the activities taking place across the highway at Camp Angell. But there is a long list of young people waiting to to admitted to the program at Angell. Waiting for the chance...

And in my mind, that makes Camp Angell a very Special Place indeed.