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**UNTOLD STORIES FROM
AMERICA'S NATIONAL PARKS**

BY SUSAN SHUMAKER

SEGREGATION IN THE NATIONAL PARKS

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SEGREGATION IN THE NATIONAL PARKS

The History of Jim Crow

The end of the Civil War ushered in a period of relative equality for blacks living in Southern and border states. During the Reconstruction era, from 1865–1877, federal laws provided civil rights protection for “Freedmen”—African Americans who had formerly been slaves. When the Compromise of 1877 gave the presidency to Rutherford B. Hayes in return for his promise to end Reconstruction, the federal government abandoned its efforts at protecting Southern blacks. Political leaders in each Southern state soon began passing laws to separate the races. Jim Crow¹ laws were enacted on a state and local level and enforced between 1876 and 1964, requiring racial segregation, especially of African Americans, in all public facilities. In the early 1880s, the Supreme Court formalized many of these restrictions, taking the teeth out of much of the previous decade’s civil rights legislation. In the landmark Civil Rights Cases (1883), the Court upheld that state-mandated segregation was legal as long as the law provided for “separate but equal” facilities (Wikipedia Reconstruction Period).

The degree to which Jim Crow was enacted and enforced varied from place to place. In Virginia, so-called “Redeemer” politicians actively limited African American participation in government—reducing the number of polling places in black precincts and gerrymandering cities to minimize anti-segregationist seats in the state legislature. Between 1890 and 1910, state governments across the South prevented a majority of blacks from voting by various techniques, including poll taxes and literacy tests, waived for whites due to grandfather clauses. The results effectively deprived black Americans of their rights—guaranteed by the 14th and 15th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution—to participate in white society and to vote. Of the estimated 181,000 African American males of voting age in 1890 Alabama, for example, only 3,000 were deemed eligible and registered to vote (Wikipedia Jim Crow).

Some of the most important laws passed during the Jim Crow era required that public places and public transportation be segregated by race, including public parks. Historical accounts of National Park Service policy regarding segregation are few, however, and, today, NPS historians disagree about the extent of formalized planning for segregation. The policy appears to have been to follow local custom, at least in the early years. This is borne out by a look at specific Southern parks, all of which indicate that planning for segregation of black Americans did most certainly occur, from the beginnings of Jim Crow through the early 1940s.

To get a better understanding of how these politics played out locally, it is important to discuss each situation individually, beginning with a unique one: Hot Springs National Park.

I. Hot Springs National Park

Hot Springs Reservation est.: 1832; Hot Springs National Park est.: 1921

¹ Jim Crow laws were named for a popular black-face character created by minstrel performer Daddy Rice.

A. About the Site

Bathing at Hot Springs from the mid-nineteenth century through the mid-twentieth was a popular activity, prescribed by doctors as a cure-all for an impressive list of ailments—from arthritis to syphilis, psoriasis to stomach ache. After the railroads arrived in 1875, Hot Springs became a European-style spa, attracting people from across North America and beyond.² When new cures for arthritis appeared later in the twentieth century, the popularity of Hot Springs waned and today nearly all of the bathhouses have closed (Hot Springs Destination Guide; Table).

Although Hot Springs National Park was not established until 1921, Congress set aside Hot Springs Reservation (which eventually became the park) much earlier, on April 20, 1832, a full forty years before Yellowstone. The Federal Government owned the healing waters of Hot Springs and the land through which it flowed, and the Department of Interior was responsible for leasing land for bathhouses and selling spring water to the tenants. Because of the site's longevity and its nature as a site for bathing—a highly charged activity, in terms of racial mixing—the history of segregation at Hot Springs is more complete and more complex than at other parks (Shugart 7/9/06).

B. Reconstruction and the First Years of Jim Crow

In what appears to be a reflection of Reconstruction sensibilities, many of the baths at Hot Springs appear not to have been segregated in the years immediately following the Civil War. Photographs from the early 1870s clearly show white and black men bathing together at the bathhouses. At Mud Hole, Corn Hole, and 'Ral' Spring—all outdoor bathing facilities—African Americans bathed openly with Caucasians. At least one, if not more, of the more formal establishments on prestigious bathhouse row, St. Weir and George, was also open to all races. A photograph taken circa 1872 shows African American bathers collected at the entrance to the house. And, in 1877, when bathers gathered to protest the Superintendent's closing of 'Ral Spring pool enclosure, a few black faces could be seen in the crowd (Shugart 7/19/06).

By the early 1880s, with the establishment of Jim Crow laws, the bathhouses had nearly all been segregated. From the first days of segregation, African Americans attempted to build all-Negro bathhouses in Hot Springs. Evidence suggests, however, that they were denied the right to do so.

In a series of hearings held at Hot Springs in March 1884, testimony was taken from two men—Jackson D. Page and Napoleon Rowell—both of whom had applied to build all-Negro bathhouses. Despite their successful fulfillment of the application process—including the drawing of plans and raising of all necessary funds—the men in question were never allowed to build. A portion of Jackson Page's testimony follows:

Q. Have you ever made application for a bathhouse site? — A. Somewhere in the neighborhood of three years ago I made application to the then acting Superintendent. General Kelley, I think.

Q. Did you file a written application? — A. Yes, and plans and specifications.

² During the 1920s and '30s, the mayor of Hot Springs reputedly ran a gambling syndicate worth \$30 million per year; customers included Al Capone and Bugsy Malone (Hot Springs Destination Guide).

³ Ral is an abbreviation of "neuralgia," the condition that the waters of the spring were purported to cure (Shugart 7/19/06).

- Q. Well, what was done about it? — A. I do not know, sir. It was filed with the superintendent.
- Q. What did he say to you in reference to it? — A. He said that it would be forwarded to the Secretary of the Interior.
- Q. Did you ever hear any more of it? — A. No, sir.
- Q. Did you get the lease? — A. No, sir.
- Q. Was any reason ever given you for not getting it? — A. No, sir.
- Q. Do you hold any official position here? — A: Yes, sir; I am justice of the peace of this township.
- Jackson Page, March 1884 (U.S. House 127-128)

Mr. Rowell responded to the same line of questioning in similar terms. He raised the necessary funds, had professional plans drawn to the government's specifications, made application to the superintendent, and was denied without explanation. In the meantime, white applicants had their projects approved and began building (U.S. House 147).

Frustrated, and hearing that Assistant Secretary of the Interior Joslyn was visiting Hot Springs, Mr. Rowell took matters into his own hands:

I waited on [Assistant Secretary Joslyn] with fifteen colored people at the Arlington Hotel, and I got him out on the porch and told him that the colored people were prospering here and all we needed was a place for our people to bathe at; that a great many colored people were coming here daily, on an average of a hundred a day, and they ought to have baths. I told him I was a bather myself and I told him I knew that both sects could not bathe together with much comfort. — Napoleon Rowell, March 1884 (U.S. House 147)

Assistant Secretary Joslyn agreed with Rowell and told him to make an application and submit it to him along with plans and specifications. This Rowell did, having acquired the plans from the city engineer.

I took [the application] up and handed it to Mr. Joslyn; he was out when I went there and I waited until he came back. He said I would hear from him in a few days, as he thought it would be favorably acted on.

Q. How long ago was that? — A. That was the last application I made; that was some time about the latter part of August or the 1st of September. He then went back to Washington and I expected to hear from him, and I never heard. I wrote to the Interior Department, and I heard nothing. And this committee of colored people asked me what had become of our lease, and I told them I did not know. It was summer time, and I told them I guessed the Interior Department was taking a vacation.

—Napoleon Rowell, March 1884 (U.S. House 147)

Despite the problems encountered in opening their own bathhouses, African Americans were certainly allowed—indeed, encouraged—to continue working in them. Throughout the history of Hot Springs, African Americans provided most of the services at the bathhouses, usually filling the position of bath attendant.⁴ The bath attendant position was so common that a reference

4 Later, African Americans also served as massage therapists, porters, and engineers.

book of the time listed “washin” as a primary occupation for residents living in Happy Hollow, a predominantly black area of Hot Springs. In exchange for their long hours (including cleaning the pools and, in many cases, supplying and laundering all materials needed), black attendants in the 1880s made approximately \$15/month. The superintendent worked to increase these salaries so that, by 1892, male attendants were making \$55/month and female attendants \$30/month (Exhibit 1, 5–6).

In 1911, responding to the predominance of black attendants, the management of one bathhouse—the Buckstaff—requested permission to hire white attendants only. By 1913, the Buckstaff Bathhouse was advertising “All white attendants,” claiming this meant an improvement in service. Black attendants did not work at the Buckstaff again until the 1960s (“African Americans” 6).

C. The Government Free Bathhouse

Before the building of all-Negro bathhouses, African Americans had limited choices for bathing. At a couple of the bathhouses in town—the Ozart⁵ and the Independent—blacks were allowed to bathe, but only between the hours of five o'clock and six o'clock p.m., a far from auspicious time, according to doctors.

Towards that time in the evening it is cool and then [the bathers] would have to go a long ways, because the most of them live off the front streets, and most of the medical people think it is injurious to go so far after a bath, especially in the cold time of the day. . . . My experience is that in winter time, from September to the 1st of April, all the physicians recommend baths from between 10 and 12 o'clock midday, when the air is most pleasant. —Napoleon Rowell, March 1884 (U.S. House 147–148)

The only place where African Americans were allowed to bathe at any time of day was in the Government Free Bathhouse. Built over the popular “Mud Hole” spring, the Government Bathhouse was constructed in 1878 for those who could not afford to pay to bathe elsewhere. During the early 1880s, wealthy patrons, regardless of race, often chose to bathe there, as well, believing the waters to be superior. Blacks and whites, men and women—all had access to this bathhouse, but waits were often long, since the flow of water from the spring was weak (“African Americans” 1).

In 1893, the superintendent of Hot Springs required bathers to apply for baths at the Government Bathhouse strictly on the basis of poverty. Yet this was still the only bathhouse where African Americans, many of whom were affluent, were allowed to bathe at all hours. The new policy justifiably angered black visitors, who were forced to perjure themselves by signing a paper declaring their poverty before partaking of the springs (Shugart 7/9/06).

D. The Construction of Black Bathhouses

In the first years of the twentieth century, African American organizations and businessmen were finally permitted to build establishments specifically for black bathers. None of these black

5 Formerly the St. Weir and George (Shugart 7/19/06).

bathhouses were on prestigious “Bath House Row”—the section of Magnolia Avenue containing the original eight bathhouses, now a Historic Landmark District—but were elsewhere within the park (Shugart 7/9/06).

The Crystal Bathhouse was the first bathhouse to be built exclusively for black bathers. Designed by architect John McCaslin (who had constructed other bathhouses in the district), the Crystal opened in April of 1904 and was located at 415 Malvern Avenue, on the edge of the African American business district. On September 5, 1913, a date that would come to be known as “Black Friday,” the Crystal Bathhouse burned in a massive fire that destroyed fifty city blocks in Hot Springs (“African Americans” 2).

Following closely on the heels of the Crystal was the Pythian Bathhouse and Sanitarium, named for its proprietors, the Knights of Pythias, an African American fraternal organization and insurance cooperative founded in 1880. The Pythian opened on December 27, 1914. Standing on the site where the Crystal had burned, it was designed by African American W.T. Bailey, head of the architecture department at the Tuskegee Institute. The bathhouse provided services at half price to members of the order and, after a period of time, was rebuilt on a much grander scale—adding more rooms, a sick ward, and two additional floors (“African Americans” 3; “Knights of Pythia”).

Bailey constructed a second African American bathhouse in 1922, financed by yet another fraternal insurance company: Woodmen of the Union. By far the most impressive of the black bathhouses, the Woodmen of the Union featured first-class hotel accommodations, a 2,000-seat theater (the Woodmen of the Union Hall), a print shop, gymnasium, beauty parlor, and newsstand. The complex was frequented by top name entertainers, sports celebrities, and political figures, including musicians Count Basie and Louis Jordan, tap dancer Clayton “Peg Leg” Bates, and boxer Joe Louis. It was also the premier African American healthcare facility of the day, housing—in addition to the bathhouse—a hospital, nursing school, and dental office (“African Americans” 3; “We Bathe the World”).

For decades to come, black patrons could choose between two African American bathhouses—the Pythian and the Woodmen of the Union. In the mid-1930s, like many other Depression-era businesses, the Woodmen encountered financial difficulties and, in 1935, was sold. Its hospital moved to the fourth floor of the Pythian building, ensuring continued health care for the African American community (“African Americans” 3; “We Bathe the World”).

The Woodmen of the Union changed hands several times during the 1930s and ‘40s. On February 8, 1951, the bathhouse reopened as the National Baptist Hotel and Sanitarium, having been purchased three years prior and remodeled extensively by the National Baptist Convention. The building once again became a center of the thriving African American business and arts communities, with 96 rooms and luxury suites. Its 2,000- and 500-seat auditoriums attracted entertainers and guests like Diana Ross and Thurgood Marshall. Continuing in the tradition of the original Woodmen, National Baptist opened a hospital, nurse’s training school, and doctors’ offices, with bathing in the hot springs still maintaining its central role in the prescribed care (Exhibit 4).

The National Baptist opened just after the heyday of Hot Springs bathhouses. The resort community’s biggest year was 1946-1947, when just over a million paid baths were given.

That same year, the Pythian gave more than 60,000 baths, or roughly 6% of the total. The Pythian's peak had come the year before, 1945-1946, in which nearly 65,000 baths were given, approximately 8% of all baths in Hot Springs that season (Table).

Although National Baptist quickly overtook Pythian in terms of popularity, giving between 1,000-3,000 more baths per year, its days were numbered. Sometime in the early 1960s, just before passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, public places in Arkansas were fully integrated. A report in the archives of Hot Springs relates that, on Thursday, March 28, 1963, two African American men, national officers of the NAACP, made "a test of nondiscrimination" at the Hot Springs bathhouses. The men made applications for baths at the Buckstaff Bathhouse at 9:10 a.m. (Table; Reid 2).

The applications were accepted but they were asked to return at 2:30 p.m. for baths at the bath halls were crowded at that time. These two gentlemen, along with . . . [two] local ministers and officers in the local NAACP chapter, conferred with the Superintendent, Assistant superintendent, and Chief Park Ranger. . . . After discussion, Mr. [Orland] Koonce [Manager of Buckstaff Bathhouse] stated that he would abide by the terms of his contract and at about 2:30 p.m. (the beginning of afternoon bathing hours), the gentlemen were administered baths at the Buckstaff Bathhouse (Reid 2).

After desegregation, the two African American bathhouses began slowly to lose clientele. Alroy Puckett, the National Baptist manager from 1968 to 1983, said of its decline, "It's a small price to pay for integration. If that is what is killing us, then let it go on." The Pythian closed in 1975, having drawn less than 2,000 baths the year before. The last all-black bathhouse, National Baptist closed its doors permanently in 1983. The structure still stands on Malvern Avenue ("African Americans" 4; Table; "We Bathe the World").

II. George Washington Birthplace National Monument

Est. 1930

A. About the Site

During its first decade of existence, the National Park Service, created in 1916, had focused its efforts almost exclusively on the preservation and protection of natural and archaeological resources in the western United States. All the while, NPS Assistant Director Horace Albright had wanted to expand the system to include the nation's historic and military sites. One such property in which Albright took a keen interest was Wakefield—a small acreage in Tidewater Virginia, near the mouth of the Potomac, where George Washington had been born.

In 1928, Albright was named director of the Service. Like other historic and military properties of the time, Wakefield was then under the protection of the War Department. The property had received a good deal of public attention, partly thanks to the efforts of the Wakefield National Memorial Association (WNMA) and its founder Josephine Wheelwright Rust, but also because of the interest of John D. Rockefeller, Jr. In July of that year, Rockefeller had been given a leather-bound book about the property. His interest piqued, the wealthy philanthropist—already involved in a much grander restoration project just south of Wakefield—purchased 267 acres adjacent to the birth site for \$115,000, and placed it in his River Holding Company for safe keeping. He

planned to give the property to WNMA on January 7, 1930, but with one condition: the group would have to have raised an equal amount through public donations (Bruggeman 20).

Albright, aware of Rockefeller's stipulation, seized the opportunity to help WNMA raise the necessary funds and, in the process, further his vision of a more historically-oriented NPS. He called his friend and ally, Michigan Representative Louis Cramton, for a favor. Cramton argued on the floor that Rockefeller would only deliver if there were a guarantee that Wakefield would be cared for in perpetuity. He proposed that Congress fund the restoration of the property, but only if WNMA deeded its interests to the Park Service. The majority agreed, as did WNMA, and appropriated \$50,000 to support the construction of the "Memorial House"—a replica of the home in which Washington was born—and an additional \$15,000 to relocate a granite obelisk, originally erected in 1896 to mark the supposed spot of Washington's birth. President Hoover signed the bill on January 23, 1930, and the George Washington Birthplace National Memorial was formally established. The National Park Service had its first historic preservation site. Albright—who would take a special interest in the project throughout his brief tenure as director—could not have been more pleased (Bruggeman 21–22).⁶

B. Jim Crow and Wakefield

The site's first superintendent, Philip Hough, arrived on February 16, 1932, just in time to celebrate George Washington's birthday in the newly completed Memorial House. The Monument's dedication ceremony was held shortly thereafter.⁷ During its first decade, visitors were plentiful at the site and their experience appears to have been positive overall. Park Service administration raised concerns, however, about one aspect of the visitor experience at Wakefield: Race relations (Bruggeman 113–114).

After reviewing a landscape report, Arthur Demaray raised the issue of segregation in a letter to Albright:

There is another matter which should be mentioned at this time. If the recreational area is developed at Pope's Creek and the Wakefield Memorial Association places their proposed recreational building at this location, there will be need of another recreational area where colored people can go. When we were at Wakefield this time, we went down to the old wharf on the Potomac River beyond the burial ground and found colored people bathing there. I understand that more and more this area is being utilized by colored people. I think this situation should be frankly met by encouraging the colored people to go to this point and by providing tables and other picnicking facilities for limited use by colored people. —A.E. Demaray to Horace Albright, 6 Aug 1931 (Demaray 2)

At George Washington Birthplace National Monument, and at Shenandoah afterward, the federal government's policy was to recognize local laws and policies regarding segregation of public

⁶ Exhibiting his typical enthusiasm for a project, Albright wrote two pieces about Wakefield for the *New York Times*: "Wakefield Washington Shrine Was Begun after Long Study," *New York Times*, 19 July 1931, p. XX6; and "Washington's Boyhood Homes: The Place Held by Wakefield." *New York Times*, 29 March 1931, p. XI6

⁷ The Dedication Ceremony was held May 14, 1932.

facilities. In Virginia, that amounted to adherence to Jim Crow laws.

The first Jim Crow law was enacted in the state of Virginia in 1900 and required separate seats for African Americans on streetcars and passenger trains. Two years later, Virginia's state constitution restricted African American voting through the use of property and literacy qualifications. Segregation laws continued to be passed through the first half of the twentieth century, increasingly limiting the mixing of the races. In 1926, the Virginia General Assembly passed the most wide-ranging of such legislation—the Massenburg Bill—requiring the separation of black and white Americans in theaters, auditoriums, and other places of public assembly. With the Massenburg Bill, Virginia became the first and only state to segregate the races in all places of public assembly. According to historians, however, the Commonwealth appears neither to have led nor trailed behind other Southern states in the creation of Jim Crow laws (Robinson 71).⁸

Members of the white majority in Virginia would, undoubtedly, have expected the races to be segregated in the state's new national monuments and parks. Indeed, the Massenburg Bill might well have been interpreted so as to make mixing of the races at campgrounds and picnic areas illegal. Accordingly, in 1933 a comfort station behind the residential area at Wakefield was designated “for the use of such colored people as may be working in that section.” There is no documentation supporting whether or not the structure was initially planned as a segregated facility and, if so, by whom. Historian Seth Bruggeman suggests that the CCC may well have built the station for the use of its own workers (Robinson 72; Bruggeman 114–115).

The most substantial visitor complaint received during the Monument's first decade of operations was regarding unequal treatment of African Americans at the site. On June 14, 1938, Sister M. Dominica of Saint Augustine's Convent in Washington, DC, visited Wakefield with the director of the convent's school, Father Hamilton, and a group of black schoolchildren. This was not Sister Dominica's first visit to the property, but it was the first time she had reason to complain about her party's treatment. The day following her visit, she penned a note to Director Arno Cammerer:

I was amazed when we reached the gates yesterday and were told by the superintendent that it was the law that colored people should be segregated from the whites on the picnic grounds. He then jumped into his car and escorted us to the place he claimed that was set aside for colored. It was about a mile from the mansion, and if we had gone much further we should have been in the water. There were no tables or benches such as you would expect to find in a picnic ground or any other conveniences. The superintendent returned later and brought two old and dirty buckets of water for us to drink from, also an old dirty dipper, and trashcan. He told us that if we left any trash he could, according to law, compel us to come back and clean it up. . . . Then too, at the tea room we were told that they did not sell soft drinks or ice cream, a statement which was untrue, but that we could get both at the Post Office. —Sister M. Dominica to Arno Cammerer, 15 June 1938 (Dominica)

⁸ For more on Jim Crow in Virginia, see Charles E. Wynes, “The Evolution of Jim Crow Laws in Twentieth Century Virginia,” *Phylon* 26 (4), 1967, 416–421; Ronald L. Heinemann, *Harry Byrd of Virginia* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1966), 62.

Sister Dominica described the children:

We only take children on our trips who are well behaved and who know how to act as ladies and gentlemen and it is needless to say that the Sisters know how to conduct themselves at all times. I can also add that, although they are colored, this is the first time they have ever been insulted on any trip they have taken either in the North or South. —Sister M. Dominica to Arno Cammerer, 15 June 1938 (Dominica)

Sister Dominica asked Cammerer to look into the matter. She ended her letter with a bang:

I should like to state as a criticism that you should choose a superintendent who is not steeped in prejudice and who is at least a gentleman. We are contemplating another trip to Wakefield and if the same thing happens I shall refer the matter directly to Secretary Ickes.

Respectfully yours, Sister M. Dominica, 15 June 1938 (Dominica)

The same day Sister Dominica wrote her letter, Father Hamilton paid a visit to Assistant Director Roger Toll, to register a complaint in person (Cammerer).

Cammerer sent an immediate apology to the sister. He asked Toll to call Superintendent Hough for a full explanation. The following day he received a letter from the superintendent, completely dismissing the complaint. Hough also accused a young member of the St. Augustine party of stealing.

All in all, this is the most unpleasant visitation we have had in the seven summer seasons I have been here—and all that happened was due to the fact that they were segregated for their lunch only. All I can say is that that is the way it's done in Virginia. If I did wrong, I'm sorry—but then again if I had let them in the regular picnic ground we would no doubt be having complaints from the white visitors. This matter may become a real problem. I would say off-hand that not more than one percent of our visitors are colored and it does not seem justifiable to maintain a special picnic ground for them, and if we did we would soon be swamped with colored people. That kind of news travels fast. —Philip Hough to Arno Cammerer, 16 June 1938 (Hough 2–3)

Continuing, the superintendent revealed his bias:

I fully realize that this place is open to all people, under definite regulations. We have never drawn any line except in the matter of their eating. We do not ignore colored visitors. We answer their questions civilly and try to give them the essential information about the place—but we do not go out of our way to encourage them to come here. —Philip Hough to Arno Cammerer, 16 June 1938 (Hough 3)

On June 20, Cammerer responded to Hough recommending the creation of separate facilities for African Americans.

In the Shenandoah and Great Smoky Mountains National Parks we have set aside picnic areas for colored people which will be further expanded as the demand increases. At Fort Pulaski National Monument and other areas we have separate comfort stations for colored people.

It is our policy, depending upon the demand, to have equal accommodations for colored people and for white people. Since there apparently is a demand for this type of service at Wakefield, you should develop a picnic area for colored people that will be of equal character and attractiveness to the one provided for white people. . . . If you make arrangements above as outlined, I think you will have no further trouble. —Arno Cammerer to Philip Hough, 20 June 1938 (Cammerer 1)

Cammerer's recommendation was followed, at least on paper. On the 1939 master plan, a proposed "picnic area" accommodating segregated facilities is shown. There is no evidence to suggest, however, that the Monument ever formally maintained separate facilities for blacks (Bruggeman 116).

III. Shenandoah National Park

Est. 1935

A. Separate but Equal

Segregated facilities would experience their Park Service fluorescence at another Virginia park: Shenandoah. From 1932, when the project was in its nascent stages, through 1940, five years into the operation of the park, Shenandoah National Park planned and maintained a completely separate facility, Lewis Mountain, for African American visitors. Lewis Mountain wasn't fully integrated until 1947, when the park reopened after World War II.

Shenandoah was enormously successful from the beginning. In 1935, the year it was dedicated, Shenandoah and Skyline Drive received 516,637 visitors, more than any other park that year. Two years later, it was the first park to top a million visitors. Shenandoah was popular with African Americans, as well. Approximately 10,000 visited the park each year between 1938 and 1940—roughly one percent of the total number. "Because of the increasing numbers of colored people in the park," wrote resident landscape architect Harvey Benson in August 1936, "it seems necessary to provide facilities for them" (Robinson 58, 61).

Development of facilities at Shenandoah trailed far behind visitor interest and it wasn't until February 17, 1936, that bids went out on a concession contract. Virginia Sky-Line Company, under the direction of former Richmond Chamber of Commerce vice president Mason Maghum, won the bid, calling for an investment of \$1.75 million to construct or renovate 14 lodge, picnic, and camping areas, and granting the company a 20-year contract (Robinson 59–60).

Not mentioned in the bid invitation was one requirement that clearly had been in the plans all along. More than three years previously, Director Albright had received a hand-written message from Deputy Director Arno Cammerer. The scribbled note, added to a November 30, 1932, memorandum about potential development at the park, read: "Provision for colored guests" ("Laboratory" 1; Robinson 61).

Cammerer's note, however, dated from the Hoover administration. With the next administration—that of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, beginning the following March—the federal government's involvement in the desegregation of Southern institutions slowly increased. While

the Park Service made plans, FDR's Secretary of the Interior, Harold Ickes, expressed his personal feelings in his diary:

Of course, my stand on the Negro question is well known. I have been in advance of every other member of the Cabinet, and the Negroes recognize this. . . . It begins to look as if real justice and opportunity for the Negro at long last might begin to come to him at the hands of the Democratic party, which Negroes have scorned . . . until they swung over to Roosevelt in large numbers in 1932 . . . —Harold L. Ickes, 20 Dec 1936 (Ickes Vol II 20)

From the time he joined the Roosevelt administration in early March 1933, Ickes acted on a lifelong commitment to civil liberties and civil rights. In the 1920s, he had briefly served as president of the Chicago branch of the NAACP and continued his membership throughout the next decade. Two of his earliest acts as Secretary were to abolish Interior's segregated lunchrooms and to create an Office of Negro relations within the department for monitoring race relations. "Throughout Roosevelt's entire first term in office," biographer Jean Neinabar Clarke wrote, "Harold Ickes, in his various capacities, did more to further the rights of minorities than did any other official in the administration" (Clarke 180–182).

Ickes opinions, however, were far more progressive than the stated policies of the National Park Service. In September 1936, Arthur Demaray, assistant to Cammerer, wrote:

The program of development of facilities . . . for the accommodation and convenience of the visiting public contemplates . . . separate facilities for white and colored people to the extent only as is necessary to conform with the generally accepted customs long established in Virginia but not to such an extent as to interfere with the complete enjoyment of the park equally by all alike. . . . To render the most satisfactory service to white and colored visitors it is generally recognized that separate rest rooms, cabin colonies and picnic ground facilities should be provided. —Arthur A. Demaray to L.E. Wilson, 18 Sep 1936 (Robinson 80; "Laboratory" 1-2)

B. African Americans and the CCC

Ickes had clashed with Cammerer over civil rights issues before, specifically regarding the appointing of black supervisors to any all-black Civilian Conservation Camps under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service. When Ickes was approached by one of his advisors, Clark Foreman, with the idea, he was all for it and told Foreman to discuss it with Cammerer (Clarke 181).

Cammerer was characteristically cautious. In a November 23, 1933, memo that undoubtedly helped Ickes form his low opinion of the director, Cammerer apprised him of the difficulties inherent in such a change. There were nine black CCC companies at various locations in the East: Four companies at Colonial National Monument in Yorktown, VA; two companies at Gettysburg National Military Park in Pennsylvania; two companies at Chickamunga-Chattanooga National Military Park in Georgia; and one company of black World War I veterans at Shilo National Military Park in Tennessee (Clarke 181).

The supervisory work for all of these Camps are white men, generally local residents, who have been appointed on the recommendation of Senators or Members of Congress, or have secured the proper endorsements from the County Democratic Chairman. The principal difficulty at this time in giving some of the supervisory positions to negroes is that we would have to discharge white men who have political backing. However, in the event that any of the supervisory positions in these camps become vacant we might then promote enrolled colored boys who have merited such a promotion and are qualified for the work. —Arno Cammerer to Harold Ickes, 23 Nov 1933 (Clarke 181)

Ickes's high opinion of the Negro Civilian Conservation Camps was borne out the following year. In 1934, the Army held a contest to determine the finest company in each of the nine corps areas. The companies were inspected and their records reviewed by CCC officials serving as judges. The all-black 323rd company at Colonial National Monument won first place in the state of Virginia and second in the Third Corps area. That same year the 323rd was invited to attend a William and Mary football game. Before the game the African American company marched onto the field, saluted the crowd, and, after taking their seats, cheered for the home team. The William and Mary fans were delighted by the performance and sent complimentary letters to the superintendent (Paige).

A year later, Ickes was still battling the entrenched racism in the Southern CCC. Writing to Robert Fechner, director of Emergency Conservation Work, in September 1935, Ickes confessed:

For my part, I am quite certain that Negroes can function in supervisory capacities just as efficiently as can white men and I do not think that they should be discriminated against merely on account of their color. I can see no menace to the program that you are so efficiently carrying out in giving just and proper recognition to members of the Negro race. —Harold Ickes to Robert Fechner, 26 Sep 1935 (Clarke 182)

On Saturday, August 12, 1933, Harold Ickes had accompanied President Roosevelt on an inspection of Civilian Conservation Camps in Shenandoah National Park. Ickes's diary entry for that day describes a typical CCC camp in the Appalachians:

The first camp we visited was in course of construction. The second was up in the Blue Ridge Mountains along the new Skyline Drive. This was a well-established camp. In all the camps the men seemed fit, and we were told by the commander of this corps that the average gain in weight had been fifteen pounds per man. The average age is about nineteen years.

At the third camp, which was still farther up on the Skyline Drive, we stopped for lunch. We had steak, mashed potatoes, green beans, a salad, iced tea, and a so-called apple pie, which, while it was made of dough and apples, was not the conventional apple pie. All the food was good and it was all that anyone wanted. The general in charge told us that this was a typical meal, and that the food supplied the men cost the Government an average of thirty-five cents a day.

The camps are well set up, sanitary, comfortable, and clean. Army officers are in charge. Of course, it is impossible to say whether there is too much of an Army atmosphere, but I

suppose it may be granted that some sort of discipline is necessary. —Harold L. Ickes 12 Aug 1933 (Ickes Vol I 78–79)

The party wouldn't have been able to visit any African American camps that day, nor would they ever, despite plans to the contrary. Camp number NP27 was constructed at Brown Gap with the intention of making it a "Negro camp," on instructions from Washington higher-ups. Finished in April 1941, when there was still another full year of CCC activities remaining in the park, Camp NP27 was never staffed or occupied, for one simple but powerful reason: Virginia Senator Harry Byrd. When plans for the Negro camp were revealed, Byrd wrote to William Carson, head of the Virginia Commission for Conservation and Development. Carson had been a driving force behind the creation of Shenandoah and numerous state parks and, coincidentally, Byrd's former campaign manager. In the letter, Byrd told Carson that he would block all CCC activities in Shenandoah, and potentially elsewhere, if he insisted on including a Negro camp. Roosevelt needed Byrd's support on the CCC and other New Deal programs and so, presumably, Washington acquiesced to his demands (Engle 8/3/06).

C. Lewis Mountain

Evidence suggests that a number of sites were considered for the proposed "colored" facility at Shenandoah, including Bearwallow and Bear Knoll, but in February 1937 the park's first Superintendent James Lassiter reported that detailed plans were being completed "for the proposed colored picnic ground at Lewis Mountain." At an elevation of 2,400 feet, Lewis Mountain was just six miles down Skyline drive from Big Meadows, another area being developed by Virginia Sky-Line (Robinson 63).

Lewis Mountain construction couldn't happen quickly enough for Park Service administration. Directly after the plans for the development had been approved, Demaray told Lassiter that he would need to reassign Civilian Conservation Corps workers in order to complete the Lewis Mountain facility asap.

There is a growing demand for picnic areas for colored people . . . Two busloads are going up tomorrow and they have to be fitted into camping places for white people. This is not a good condition. —Arthur A. Demaray to James Lassiter, 16 July 1937 ("Laboratory" 2)

Before the creation of Lewis Mountain, African Americans had been allowed to use separate sections of other public facilities, similar to the policy of separate seating on public busses, trains, and in movie theaters (Robinson 80).

In record time, Lewis Mountain was open for business. By June of 1938, the site was three quarters finished, and the following summer was operational, with 40 picnic tables, 12 fireplaces, parking for 42 cars, campgrounds for 30 tents and trailers, and a comfort station for the picnic grounds, all built by the CCC. By 1940, construction was underway on a lodge and four two-room cabins, designed by Marcellus Wright, Jr., architect for Virginia Sky-Line, and built and maintained by the company (Robinson 64, 66).

The lodge at Lewis Mountain, as with all Wright structures within the park, adhered to the goal of all national park architecture: to “blend unobtrusively into the natural setting.”⁹ “Fitting into the landscape was the main goal,” Wright said, “and then using the native materials to the greatest extent possible.” At Lewis Mountain, Wright used native stone for the porch, fireplace, and chimney of the lodge, and designed the profile of the building to hug the terrain. A sign marking the entrance to the Lewis Mountain facility read: “Lewis Mountain Negro Area.” The first cabins and lodge were open and in service the summer of 1940 (Robinson 67, 69; “Laboratory” 2).

The staff at Lewis Mountain was comprised of African Americans, most of whom lived in Luray. The majority had first worked on the ridge as the staff at Skyland. Skyland, a resort started in the 19th century, originally employed an all-black staff. When Virginia Sky-Line took control of the facility in 1937, the staff was fired and replaced entirely by whites (Engle 8/3/06).

The dining room and lodge at Lewis Mountain soon became *the* place to be at Shenandoah. Lloyd Tutt, the African American manager of the facility for 12 years, recalls having to “beat the whites away.” In a 1978 interview, Tutt said that, when white visitors came to Lewis Mountain, he had been instructed to tell them that the campground was full and then find other places for them at white facilities. He did not, however, turn anyone away from his dining room or the lodge, making it an unofficially integrated facility at night. The lodge featured a hot band playing Boogie Woogie music by the likes of Count Basie, Albert Ammons, and Jimmy Yancey every Friday night and the food at Lewis Mountain was, by most accounts, better than anywhere else in the park. When necessary, Tutt alternated tables of African Americans and tables of white visitors in the dining room in order to accommodate everyone at dinner. “Our food was that good,” he said. The joint was jumpin’ from 1940 to 1942 and again after the war. And, although Lewis Mountain was officially integrated in 1951, blacks remained the prominent clientele there for another decade, since that was the place they had always come to in the past and Tutt and his wife continued to serve as managers (Engle 8/3/06; Robinson 88).

One group that made an annual pilgrimage to Lewis Mountain was the “New York-Virginia Club.” In Page County, VA, bordering the park, blacks were permitted to stay in school only until 10th grade. Those who wanted to continue their education were sent by their families to New York, New Jersey, or Philadelphia. The New York-Virginia Club is comprised of women and men whose educations were dictated by this Jim Crow law. According to Reed Engle, Cultural Resource Specialist at Shenandoah, the group still meets in Luray and on occasion makes it’s way back up to the park and Lewis Mountain (Engle 8/3/06).

D. Shenandoah: The “Test Case” for Integration in the Parks

Roughly one month before Ickes became involved in the decision to allow Marian Anderson to perform at the Lincoln Memorial, people within the Interior Department began looking at Shenandoah as another place to start breaking down the wall of segregation. In a January 17, 1939, letter to Ickes, Department of the Interior solicitor, Nathan R. Margold, expressed concerns that, although separate, the facilities at Shenandoah were not equal, either in number, adequacy, maintenance, or attractiveness. “Segregation of the races as now practiced” in the park, he said,

9 Linda Flint McClelland, *Building the National Parks* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 2.

was an “infringement of constitutional principles.” Margold believed that decisions regarding segregation could and should be addressed by the department, since the park was under federal jurisdiction and, thus, not bound by Virginia law (Robinson 82; “Laboratory” 2).

Superintendent Lassiter defended the facilities at Lewis Mountain in a February 8, 1939, letter to Cammerer. He admitted that the beauty of two other developed sites in the park probably surpassed Lewis Mountain, but argued that the setting of the facility at Lewis Mountain was equal or superior to the rest. Since the facilities themselves were standardized, Lewis Mountain was also equal to the others in that regard. At Cammerer’s request, Lassiter provided numbers on visitation, showing that the percentage of facilities for African Americans actually exceeded the percentage of African American visitors to the park (Robinson 83).

Assistant Secretary of the Interior Ebert Burlow wrote to Virginia’s senators Glass and Byrd for their opinions. Byrd’s reply expressed the sentiment that would, ultimately, allow segregation to continue within the park. “When the Park was established,” he wrote, “it was agreed that all laws governing the State of Virginia would be in effect within the Park area” (Robinson 84).

In the meantime, Harold Ickes was working behind the scenes to change things:

For several years I have been working with leaders of the Negro race . . . to open up national park and monument areas in the Southern States to Negroes. . . . In the Shenandoah, we experimented with several picnic areas and have had no serious complaint. I expect to extend this nondiscriminatory policy to other areas. —Harold Ickes to Archibald MacLeish, 21 May 1942 (Robinson 84)

In a move that straddled Southern segregationist policies and progressive reform, Ickes made decisions that would encourage desegregation in the parks, beginning with Shenandoah, without introducing new regulations or engaging in court battles. In a letter to Ickes, W.J. Trent, Jr., the Interior Department’s Negro Affairs officer, outlined the secretary’s approach:

[The goal of the department should be] to provide for all citizens, without segregation or discrimination, use of all facilities whether furnished by the Federal Government or the concessionaires. —W.J. Trent, Jr., to Harold Ickes, 20 March 1939 (Robinson 85)

Under Ickes’s plan, state laws would be “generally” followed, but two steps would be taken to begin desegregation in the park:

- 1) Areas would not be publicly or officially designated as white or African American.
- 2) Signs that communicated such designations would be removed.

Trent wrote that, initially at least, these steps would not apply to the private concession facilities, but only to those provided by the Park Service—picnic areas, campgrounds, trails, and comfort stations. He recommended, however, that the Park Service negotiate with concessionaires to removed racial designations from their facilities, as well (Robinson 85).

Ickes’s plan was first put into action at Shenandoah. At a meeting in Demaray’s office on March 27, 1939, with Park Service and Interior officials in attendance, it was determined that no

signs at Shenandoah would indicate segregation by race and, in addition, that one large picnic area in the park should be integrated. After a review of suitable areas, Superintendent Lassiter chose Sexton Knoll (later known as Pinnacles) picnic ground for the park's initial effort (Robinson 85; "Laboratory" 2).

Complaints soon came from Lassiter and the Virginia Sky-Line Company. Lassiter noted the heightened potential, with large numbers of summer vacationers, for clashes between African American and white visitors at Pinnacles picnic grounds, at South River, and at the Skyland coffee shop. He also wrote that not publicizing the availability of separate facilities has led to confusion among visitors and cited a letter from a New York travel bureau asking if facilities for African Americans were available, since the official literature didn't mention any. The concessioner worried that the Lewis Mountain facility would operate at a loss, since African Americans were free to camp elsewhere (Robinson 86).

Cammerer's staff at Park Service headquarters in Washington appears to have supported the Virginia Sky-Line Company's position. A memorandum to the concessioner from Cammerer stated:

I myself have felt right along that there was not sufficient demand for negroes for this particular type of accommodations to make it pay, but I understand that the Secretary [of the Interior] has insisted on the installation and that this is why we are progressing. Next year if it does not pay, we can take up the question of closing it or making it available for white occupancy. I think . . . [staff] had better advertise this, sending copies to Howard University. —Arno Cammerer ("Laboratory" 2)

The memorandum was widely circulated; Reed Engle speculates that it may have been the final nail in Cammerer's coffin. In June 1940, Ickes privately offered the directorship to Newton Drury, who accepted it before Cammerer officially "resigned" to become Regional Director at Richmond ("Laboratory" 3).

In late 1939, Superintendent Lassiter suffered a heart attack and did not return to work at Shenandoah until May of 1940. In August, he wrote what Engle calls "an unguarded letter" to the new Director:

I think the best policy to pursue is definite segregation, either by separate areas or by setting aside a portion of each area for Negroes. Of course, neither of these suggestions will meet with the approval of that group of Negroes . . . who . . . must have their millennium at once. —James Lassiter to Newton Drury, August 1940 ("Laboratory" 3)

Shenandoah employees—in a supposed attempt to resolve the uncertainty in visitors' minds—began quietly marking the maps handed out at the Front Royal entrance, indicating facilities for African Americans with red pencil. When word of this reached Drury, Lassiter was called to Washington and reprimanded. Lassiter put an immediate stop to the practice, but within a year, he'd been transferred to Santa Fe as Regional Engineer, a job that carried with it a cut in grade and salary (Robinson 86).

In January 1941, the Park Service sent its chief Engineer, Oliver G. Taylor, to survey the situation at Shenandoah. He reported that, while most of the park was still segregated, there were some integrated areas. The lodging and dining facilities at Skyland, Big Meadows, and Dickey Ridge were set aside for the use of white patrons only, but all lunch counters, gas stations, and gift shops had been successfully integrated. Toilets at these facilities, however, remained segregated. The Pinnacles picnic grounds, and its comfort station, were used by both races (Robinson 86).

Taylor found the public reaction to the Shenandoah policy mixed. Some whites kept their distance from African Americans at Pinnacles, while others—when they realized that the picnic area was integrated—simply left. African Americans who accidentally entered an area designated “whites only” were told of the policy, but not made to leave. Taylor found that most African Americans preferred facilities intended for members of their own race; he advised that segregation continue at Shenandoah, but suggested the creation of an additional integrated picnic ground (Robinson 87).

Despite Taylor’s more limited recommendation, Drury integrated all Shenandoah picnic areas for the 1941 season. No protests or grievances were made that year, although one white man did complain about being excluded from the African American campground at Lewis Mountain (Robinson 87).

E. Full Integration of the Park

By the beginning of 1942, when Lassiter’s successor took over the reigns at Shenandoah, the issue of integration had lost much of its significance. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and subsequent U.S. entry into World War II had affected visitation to the parks dramatically and immediately. Gas was rationed, visitation plummeted, and park concessions closed. By the end of 1942, Virginia Sky-Line Company had received permission to close all facilities at Shenandoah (Robinson 88).

Once the war had ended, concessions at the national parks reopened just as quickly as they had shut down. On September 1, 1945, Virginia Sky-Line Company began reopening its facilities and by the following spring was once again fully operational. Officials at Interior used the end of the war as an opportunity to push for desegregation in the parks. In December 1945, Washington issued a general bulletin to all National Park Service concessioners, stating that the December 8, 1945, *Federal Register*, page 14866, mandated full desegregation of all facilities in national parks (“Laboratory” 3; Robinson 89).

The Virginia Sky-Line Company manager, T. Frazier McCall, registered his protest with Superintendent Freeland.

In March 1939, a few days after the present officers acquired controlling stock of [Virginia Sky-Line Company] . . . a conference was held . . . at which there was present the majority of the [NPS] Director’s staff. . . . In return for the expenditure of funds necessary to carry out these plans [for facilities development], this company was assured that the facilities at Dickey Ridge, Elkwallow, Skyland and Big Meadows would be reserved for the exclusive use of White people . . . and as evidence of the Park Service’s intentions . . . the Lewis Mountain development has always carried the designation, “for the exclusive use of negroes.” . . . Instead of improving racial relations, [integration] would be a distinct

dis-service to the negroes desiring to visit the park. —T. Frazier McCall to Superintendent Freeland (“Laboratory” 3)

If the Park Service insisted on enforcing the federal regulation, Frazier wrote, it would be in violation of their agreement and Virginia Sky-Line Company would withdraw from the park. Park Service officials did not take Frazier’s threat lightly, knowing that without the concessioner in place, they would be unable to offer services to park visitors for the 1946 season. At the same time, neither NPS nor Interior felt it could grant an exception to the federal regulation (Robinson 90; “Laboratory” 3).

Ickes, in the meantime, had resigned, leaving Acting Secretary Oscar Chapman to take the lead and write to Senator Byrd about the issue. An agreement was reached; Byrd assured Virginia Sky-Line that it could continue the segregation practices it had agreed to in 1939 without fear of being taken to court by civil rights groups, but only for the 1946 season (Robinson 90).

The following year, Frazier resigned from Virginia Sky-Line Company. Lewis Mountain and the main dining room at Panorama were integrated by the new manager in October 1947. Slowly but surely, the Park Service worked with the concessioner to achieve full integration, a goal that was realized by the summer of 1950. Shenandoah National Park, in this regard, was more than a decade ahead of the rest of Virginia, where desegregation was not fully embraced until well after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Robinson 91; “Laboratory” 4).

IV. Great Smoky Mountains

Est. 1934

A. Colored Campgrounds

A similar situation to that of Shenandoah occurred in the Smokies as well, although on a much smaller and less realized scale, in part because of the timing. The Great Smoky Mountains Master Plan, drawn up in the late 1930s, indicated that the park architects were planning three “colored” campgrounds. The following announcement appeared in the October 1938 issue of *The Regional Review*, the publication for NPS Region One, headquartered in Richmond:

The program to provide recreational facilities for Negroes in certain National and State Parks and Recreational Demonstration Areas has made headway in recent weeks. A proposal to establish separate Negro camp grounds in Great Smoky Mountains National Park has been approved by the Acting Secretary of the Interior and work is expected to start soon. Facilities for Negroes already have been installed in Shenandoah National Park and there are plans to extend them. (“Negro Recreational Program” 42)

The publication indicated that organized camps and recreational facilities, including swimming pools, were also being planned for federal Recreational Demonstration lands twenty miles southwest of Richmond, between Raleigh and Durham, NC, and for a CCC camp near Memphis. The Memphis camp had been established to build the “Shelby County Negro Recreational Area,” providing organized camping, swimming, picnicking, and sports for African Americans (“Negro Recreational Program” 42).

At a meeting held in the drafting rooms at Great Smoky Mountains National Park on January 24, 1939, the plan was discussed further, with Superintendent J.R. Eakin¹⁰ and various Park Service engineers, landscape architects, and others in attendance.

There will be three Negro camp grounds shown on the Master Plans as follows at Mr. Eakin's request: Cades' Cove, near Chestnut Branch on Fightin' Creek road, and opposite Collins Creek on south side of mountain on New Found Gap Highway. Mr. Edwards suggested that there was a small cove opposite Chestnut Branch which will be reviewed. Mr. Mattson said that he would prefer to concentrate all of the developments between Smokemont and the boundary rather than let them spread above Smokemont and that he favored the Towstring area for the negro development. Mr. Eakin believes that this is too close to Indian land. —Mary Ruth Chiles, Secretary to the Superintendent (Chiles 4).

When the Master Plan was revised in 1941, all-black facilities again were discussed. Corrections to the plan were made throughout the year and finalized at a September 22 meeting between Eakin and what he called the "resident technicians" (Eakin 1).

(1) Proposed Negro Picnic Area, Sugarlands

This area, realized a need by all present, consists of approximately 12 acres which will be dedicated to picnicking for colored people and provide a limited number of camping areas which will be prepared for use if needed and may generally be used for picnic purposes. —J.R. Eakin, 26 Sep 1941 (Memorandum 4)

In a memorandum to Region One headquarters, Eakin reported that surveys of the area had been made and plans were in the process of preparation. He also noted that development of Sugarlands would eliminate the need for the African American camping area on Fighting Creek (Memorandum 4).

In his response to Eakin, Thomas Allen, Regional Director in the Richmond office, made it clear that NPS would handle segregation in the Smokies as it had in Shenandoah. In his brief list of suggested changes to the Master Plan, the last item dealt with racial segregation (Allen).

Reference to "colored" campgrounds should be omitted from the plan, although locations for these campgrounds can be continued as you have suggested. —Thomas Allen to J.R. Eakin, 10 Dec 1941 (Allen 2)

As in Shenandoah, areas would not be publicly or officially designated as white or African American, thereby encouraging—but not legislating—desegregation in Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

B. The CCC in the Great Smoky Mountains

Before segregated facilities were being sketched into the Smokies Master Plan, Superintendent

.....
10 Pronounced A-kin.

Eakin was faced with another thorny civil rights issue, this time concerning the Civilian Conservation Camps in the park. CCC workers first arrived in the park on May 27, 1933, just two months after Congress approved the program's creation. Forestry journals and local newspapers heralded their arrival:

Up in the Sugarlands, 212 boys today were ready to take up reforestation work at the first conservation camp established in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. (Jolley 5)

Other campsites followed; within months the park had seventeen camps and a work force of some 4,000 young men, mostly from Tennessee and North Carolina, but others from New York, New Jersey, and beyond. Each camp employed two hundred enrollees, several military officers, and soliders, who in the early days served as camp sergeants, company clerks, mess stewards, and first aid attendants (Jolley 5-7).

The boys in the CCC were of various ethnic backgrounds—bearing names like Karp, Szablewski, and Zucco—but all were Caucasian. When, in August 1935, the War Department proposed replacing the Second Corps enrollees with four African American CCC companies, Eakin consulted with local community leaders (Jolley 9).

For replacements for the Second Corps CCC companies that were moved west, Fourth Corps proposed to send in four colored CCC companies. I discussed the matter with local people who were all agreed this would be a serious mistake. They cited several instances where colored construction crews had been run out of the area and all agreed local peace officers could not be expected to protect the colored companies. —J.R. Eakin ("Superintendent's Report" 9)

Eakin reported to the War Department that he was against the proposal.

I then telephoned..the Fourth Corps and stated I objected to the colored companies moving into the Park solely on the basis of their welfare; if they were sent in Corps would have to accept full responsibility. White replacements have arrived in all but one camp. I am assured by the Corps this camp will be filled by white enrollees. —J.R. Eakin ("Superintendent's Report" 9-10)

Although evidence suggests that there may have been black army officers associated with the CCC camps in the Smokies—and there certainly were black loggers prior to the creation of the park—there were never any African American Civilian Conservation Camps in Great Smoky Mountains National Park (Hartigan 7/7/06, 8/3/06).

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