

A Guide to the History and Interpretive Proposal for Sherando Lake Recreation Area Oral Histories, 1990-1991 SdArch 0016

Life in a CCC camp: A history of Camp NF-8 Sherando, Virginia oral histories
1990-1991



Title Statement

A Guide to the History and Interpretive Proposal for Sherando Lake Recreation Area Oral Histories, 1990-1991 SdArch 0016

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Unit ID

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Unit Date

1990-1991

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Abstract

The collection comprises 12 interviews with people associated the Sherando CCC camp as prisoners, enrollees, prison guards, and other various military personel. Interview topics range from camp establishment to the lasting effects and ending of the program.

source

Benavitch, David W.

Extent

1 cubic feet 13 folders, 21 audiocassettes, 12 vhs, 2 3.5" floppy disks

Repository

James Madison University Libraries Special Collections

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

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Biographical / Historical

Sherando Lake Recreation Area, located in the George Washington National Forest in Virginia, was built (1933) and maintained by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) during the Depression era. Known as Camp NF-8 during World War II, it served as a Civilian Public Service (CPS) facility for conscientious objectors (1941-1944), and then as a German Prisoner of War (POW) stockade (1944-1946). It is now a part of the federal national recreation area system.

Scope and Contents

The collection comprises 12 interviews with people associated the Sherando Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp as prisoners, enrollees, prison guards, and other various military personel. Interview topics range from camp establishment to the lasting effects and ending of the program.

The interviewees held a range of positions with Larry Ballard, James Blackwell, Roger "Hillbilly" Bryant, and Edward VanFossen recounting their time as enrollees within the CCC camp. Karl Baumann, Albert Moreman, and Hans Schagus were all German prisoners of war in the CCC camp during World War II. Colonel John A. Betterly and Jack Branch recount their role as military personel within the camps. Finally, Reverend Mark E. Wolfe was a conscientious objector assigned to civilian service within the Sherando Camp.

More detailed topics for their interviews include: camp establishment, command and administration, discipline, the role of the Forest Service, local "experienced men," women in camp life, effects of the CCC program on the local area, road construction (Sherando Lake Forest Camp and Dam Project, Big Levels Game Refuge), fire fighting, reflections on the CCC experience, its lasting effects and the end of the program.

Keywords

Benavitch, David W.

Arrangement

Interviews are arranged chronologically.

Description of Subordinate Components

Background paper

Unit ID 16-1

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27432

Unit Date 1991 May 31

Mixed Materials [1000898334] 1 (box)

Container 1 (folder)

Larry Ballard interviewed by David W. Benavitch

Unit ID 16-2

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27433

Unit Date 1991 January 23

Creator Ballard, Larry K., 1912-2006

Creator Benavitch, David W.

Scope and Contents

Records the recollections of Larry Ballard, a Civilian Conservation Corps enrollee at Camp 8, Lyndhurst/Sherando Lake, Virginia during the Camp's first year (1933-34). Describes Depression era situation, the CCC selection process at Hopewell, Virginia, his home town; experiences with the Army at Fort Monroe and the formation of the 351st Company (170 men). Mentions early days at the camp site: constructing buildings and creating/clearing roads; i.e., clearing brush and hauling rocks. Talks about experiences learning a trade as a stone mason; his responsibilities as a squad leader in charge of twelve men (as part of the headquarters group); duties running the canteen, and working in the supply room. Talks about food, living conditions (before and after water and electricity); entertainment (minstrel shows); involvement with newspaper writing and the Camp "Spring Owl Newspaper." Reminisces about military and Forest Service personnel, CCC friends, and relations with local town (Waynesboro) residents. In general, records his experiences and impressions of thirteen months as a CCC participant at a camp which became a part of the national forest recreation system

Transcript

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27434

Mixed Materials [1000898334] 1 (box)

Container 2 (folder)

Extent 12 pages

Original VHS

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27536

Moving Images SA016-VHS-001 (VHS)

Original audiocassette (Tape 1)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27537

Audio SA016-CS-001 (Audiocassette)

Original audiocassette (Tape 2)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27538

Audio SA016-CS-002 (Audiocassette)

Karl Baumann interviewed by David W. Benavitch

Unit ID 16-3

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27435

Unit Date 1991 April 18

Creator Baumann, Karl, 1924-2009

Creator Benavitch, David W.

Scope and Contents

Records the recollections of Karl Baumann, a German prisoner of war during World War II in the United States at Camp 8, Lyndhurst/Sherando Lake, Virginia from April through Nov. 1945. Recalls his life as a merchant mariner in his teens; experiences in the German Navy and submarine duty during the War (incl. wounding at the invasion of Normandy, June 1944, evacuation to a hospital at Brest, capture and shipment to a POW camp in England and later to the United States). Describes experiences in this country as a POW, primarily at Camp 8, Lyndhurst, Virginia: layout of Camp/barracks; various routines (roll call, cleaning, food/meals); work assignments and projects such as cutting pulpwood, working for local farmers; clothing; and the use of exchange coupons. Describes experiences with near-food shortages (strike) and an incident resulting in cell punishment. Talks about relations with fellow prisoners and American civilians (incl. a local farmer, Galen Heatwole, who later sponsored his return back to the United States); and military guards. Records events leading up to and return home to Germany in Jan. 1946. Philosophises about human rights during wartime and religious beliefs. In general, recalls conditions in Germany leading up to the War, his life as a German soldier and POW in the U.S., and reasons for returning.

Transcript

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27436

Mixed Materials [1000898334] 1 (box)

Container 3 (folder)

Extent 16 pages

Original VHS

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27539

Moving Images SA016-VHS-002 (VHS)

Original audiocassette (Tape 1)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27540

Audio SA016-CS-005 (Audiocassette)

Original audiocassette (Tape 2)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27541

Audio SA016-CS-004 (Audiocassette)

Original audiocassette (Tape 3)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27542

Audio SA016-CS-003 (Audiocassette)

John A. Betterly interviewed by David W. Benavitch

Unit ID 16-4

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27437

Unit Date 1991 January 25

Creator Betterly, John A., Colonel (John Austin), 1906-1998

Creator Benavitch, David W.

Scope and Contents

Records the recollections of Col. John A. Betterly, Company Commander of the Civilian Conservation Corps Camp 8, Lyndhurst/Sherando Lake, Virginia from 1936 until the beginning of World War II. Briefly mentions background as a civil engineer and Army Reservist, call to duty in 1935; first assignment as the junior officer for an all black CCC unit in Hanover, Virginia and view of segregation issues as a northerner. Describes experiences as the commander of Camp NF-8: relations between enrollees, officers and

townspeople (Waynesboro) and efforts to cultivate understanding between groups. Talks about the different roles of the Army (camp life) and Forest Service (work projects). Describes day-to-day administrative duties running the camp: roll call; inspections (barracks, latrine, kitchen); paperwork; paydays; discipline and hearings; and various programs run by the Army for enrollees (education and medical). Talks about his first day on the job resolving an incident between "Yankees" and "Rebels;" and experiences with specific individuals (mess sergeant and doctor). Reminisces about his family and their relation with the Camp; later work as personnel Adjutant for the District; quartermaster; Pacificism; and final days with the CCC program and 3rd Corps. In general, records his experiences and impressions of the CCC program and its impact on the lives of young people during the Depression/pre-World War II era.

Transcript

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27438

Mixed Materials [1000898334] 1 (box)

Container 4 (folder)

Extent 16 pages

Original VHS

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27543

Moving Images SA016-VHS-003 (VHS)

Original audiocassette (Tape 1)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27544

Audio SA016-CS-006 (Audiocassette)

Original audiocassette (Tape 2)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27545

Audio SA016-CS-007 (Audiocassette)

James Blackwell interviewed by David W. Benavitch

Unit ID 16-5

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27439

Unit Date 1991 January 7

Creator Blackwell, James

Creator Benavitch, David W.

Scope and Contents

Records the recollections of James Blackwell, a Civilian Conservation Corps enrollee and truck driver at Camp 8, Lyndhurst/Sherando Lake, Virginia from 1935-38. Describes Depression era situation, the WPA program, and enrollment in the CCC at the age of 14 or 15 in Aug. of 1935. Mentions early days at the camp site: mixing cement; constructing buildings such as the administration building; stone masonry and the rock crusher operation (incl. picking, hauling and laying face rock to create stone walls); tree planting; and later work as a truck driver (hauling dirt and fire fighting). Talks about general living conditions; food and KP; sports (boxing) and entertainment. Reminisces about military and Forest Service personnel who helped him; CCC friends; and relations with local town (Waynesboro) residents. Mentions "Old Hen" parties and encounters with mash and whiskey; quarantine scare over polio; and discharge from the camp. In general, records his experiences and impressions of four years as a CCC participant at a camp which later became a part of the national forest recreation system.

Transcript

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27440

Mixed Materials [1000898334] 1 (box)

Container 5 (folder)

Extent 12 pages

Original VHS

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27546

Moving Images SA016-VHS-004 (VHS)

Original audiocassette (Tape 1)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27547

Audio SA016-CS-009 (Audiocassette)

Original audiocassette (Tape 2)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27548

Audio SA016-CS-008 (Audiocassette)

Jack Branch interviewed by David W. Benavitch

Unit ID 16-6

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27441

Unit Date 1991 January 3

Creator Branch, Jack, 1924-2005

Creator Benavitch, David W.

Scope and Contents

Records the recollections of Jack Branch, American enlisted Sergeant of the Guard at Camp 8, Lyndhurst/Sherando Lake, Virginia at the end of World War II (1945). Recalls experiences during the war: landing at Casablanca, Africa (1943); fighting in Italy with the 36th Army Division, and the battle of San Pietro. Talks about experiences with an Army buddy, Fletcher Burks, who he first met in basic training in the States and who was with him on and off throughout his war years, including capture and prisoner of war episodes, liberation and later return to the United States. More specifically, recalls experiences crossing the Rapido River and capture by Germans on Jan. 22, 1943. Talks about box car ride to Falkenburg, Germany and forced labor on potato farms (planting and picking; cutting wood). Recalls Red Cross packages, letter writing, and types of food they ate. Mentions attempts at escape, and final days (forced marches with Russian POWs, from Feb. 7th through April 14th, 1945) before being liberated by Americans. Describes return home, moves to Florida, Fort Meade, Md. and finally, Lyndhurst, Virginia to the CCC camp then being used as a POW stockade for German prisoners. Recollects the Camp, makeup of the guard units; the German enlisted men; and general life at the Camp (food, transportation of prisoners, their work at camp and local farms; punishment; and entertainment). In general, recalls World War II experiences over three continents and memories of wartime as a soldier, prisoner of war, and guard to German prisoners in the U.S.

Transcript

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27442

Mixed Materials [1000898334] 1 (box)

Container 6 (folder)

Extent 14 pages

Original VHS

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27549

Moving Images SA016-VHS-005 (VHS)

Original audiocassette (Tape 1)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27550

Audio SA016-CS-010 (Audiocassette)

Original audiocassette (Tape 2)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27551

Audio SA016-CS-011 (Audiocassette)

Roger "Hillbilly" Bryant interviewed by David W. Benavitch

Unit ID 16-7

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27443

Unit Date 1990 December 4

Creator Bryant, Roger W., Sr. (Roger William), 1915-1999

Creator Benavitch, David W.

Scope and Contents

Records the recollections of Roger "Hillbilly" Bryant, Conservation Corps enrollee and cook at Camp 8, Lyndhurst/Sherando Lake, Virginia from 1934-39. Describes work in the coal mines of Southwest Virginia, impact of Depression on family; and learning about the CCC. Recalls CCC enrollment process, stay at Fort Meade, Maryland, and transfer to Camp 8. Mentions early days at the camp site: road construction (Howardsville Turnpike, Campbell Mt. Rd., Coal Rd.) cutting trails (Bald Mt. Tower); setting boundary lines using barbed wire; and hauling rock. Describes in more detail experiences as a cook: use of coal stoves, 5-6 man crews; different mess halls (for Army officers, Forest Services, and enrollees); particular dishes, the warm table (i.e., buffet style dining); and attendance at a cook and bakers school at an Army base in Pennsylvania). Talks about "deployed" units which were maintained in more remote areas for purposes of trapping and recording game movement. Mentions recreation/off-times at the Camp and in Waynesboro (swimming at the Lake and boxing; entertainment by a CCC string band which regularly played in Harrisonburg on Saturdays at WSVA, the local radio station). Talks about individuals he met and various stories/experiences associated with them (the "local experienced men;" the commanders; also the pet mascots incl. a dog and two bear cubs). Recalls various nicknames men were known by, incl. his own. Mentions several situations related to moonshining: hiding a car which was used for storing and transporting whiskey, and a major fire at Big Priest Mt. which was caused by a still catching on fire. Talks about various friends who met their wives at the Camp and his own discharge after marriage. Reminisces about the impact of the CCC on his life and training which led to his job as a cook in the Navy during World War II. In general, records his experiences and impressions of five plus years as a CCC participant at a camp which later became a part of the national forest recreation system.

Transcript

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27444

Mixed Materials [1000898334] 1 (box)

Container 7 (folder)

Extent 17 pages

Original VHS

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27552

Moving Images SA016-VHS-006 (VHS)

Original audiocassette (Tape 1)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27553

Audio SA016-CS-012 (Audiocassette)

Original audiocassette (Tape 2)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27554

Audio SA016-CS-013 (Audiocassette)

Albert Moreman interviewed by David W. Benavitch

Unit ID 16-8

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27445

Unit Date 1991 May

Creator Moreman, Albert, 1924-1995

Creator Benavitch, David W.

Scope and Contents

Records the recollections of Albert Moreman, American enlisted POW guard at Camp 8, Lyndhurst/Sherando Lake, Virginia at the end of World War II (1944-end of '45). Recalls experiences during the war: drafted as an infantryman; and injury leading to training and assignment as a military guard in the

States. Describes in particular his experiences as a guard at Camp 8, then being used as a POW stockade for German prisoners. Describes the Camp, makeup of the guard units; the German enlisted men; and general life at the Camp: transportation of prisoners; their work at camp and local farms (cutting pulpwood and working at local orchards); punishment; and entertainment (German burlesque shows). Recalls particular incidents: prisoners hiding food in stove pipes, the food strike, and giving them food; and altercation with an apple orchard owner who was cheating the government. Recalls a couple of prisoners whom he knew on a personal basis; the camp officers and their wives. In general, remembers World War II experiences as a military guard in the States and in particular at the Lyndhurst/Sherando Lake Camp.

Location of Interview

Recorded in Stuarts Draft, Virginia.

Transcript

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27446

Mixed Materials [1000898334] 1 (box)

Container 8 (folder)

Extent 6 pages

Original VHS

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27555

Moving Images SA016-VHS-007 (VHS)

Original audiocassette

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27556

Audio SA016-CS-014 (Audiocassette)

Hans Schages interviewed by David W. Benavitch

Unit ID 16-9

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27447

Unit Date 1991 May 6

Creator Shages, Hans

Creator Benavitch, David W.

Scope and Contents

Records the recollections of Hans Schages, a German prisoner of war during World War II in the United States at Camp 8, Lyndhurst/Sherando Lake, Virginia from April 1945 through January 1945. Recalls training in the German Navy as a switchboard operator and experiences at Brest, France during the Normandy invasion, June 1944; his capture by Americans in October, shipment to Cherbourg, France and German counterattack in December (Battle of the Bulge). Describes shipment to a POW camp in England and later to the United States. In particular, describes experiences in this country as a POW, primarily at Camp 8, Lyndhurst, Virginia: layout of Camp/barracks; various routines (roll call, inspections, work details (at Woodrow Wilson Hospital; working for loggers, cutting pulpwood; and farmers). Mentions entertainment and church at the compound chapel. Describes near food shortages and unsuccessful food strike. Talks about fellow prisoners, guards (Albert Moreman) and strictness of the new Captain. Recalls events leading up to and return home to Krefeld, Germany (via three months in a French camp); and learning about the deaths of six family members during a bombing raid.

Transcript

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27448

Mixed Materials [1000898334] 1 (box)

Container 9 (folder)

Extent 7 pages

Original VHS

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27557

Moving Images SA016-VHS-008 (VHS)

Original audiocassette (Tape 1)**Unit ID** /repositories/4/archival_objects/27558**Audio** SA016-CS-015 (Audiocassette)**Original audiocassette (Tape 2)****Unit ID** /repositories/4/archival_objects/27559**Audio** SA016-CS-016 (Audiocassette)**Edward Vanfossen interviewed by David W. Benavitch****Unit ID** 16-10**Unit ID** /repositories/4/archival_objects/27449**Unit Date** 1990 December 4**Creator** Vanfossen, Edward**Creator** Benavitch, David W.**Scope and Contents**

Records the recollections of Edward Vanfossen, retired Forest Service employee, and a Civilian Conservation Corps LEM (Local Experienced Man) and enrollee at Camp 8, Lyndhurst/Sherando Lake, Virginia during the mid 1930's [no specific dates given]. Describes impact of the Depression, losing job as an auto mechanic, and efforts to pay off a \$18.00 debt. Talks about employment by the CCC as a LEM, primarily working as a mechanic and general handyman around the Camp. Mentions various jobs including road building and dam construction as an equipment operator (using a trail builder, tractor and shovel); also job as a forest fire water boss. Talks about various people and stories about them: mostly those who worked around the camp such as mechanics, tool sharpeners, the Camp doctor (and his tonsil operations); Forest Service officers; the head stonemason and carpenters; and other LEMs. Recalls chaperoning CCC boys during off time and their excursions into town (Waynesboro). Describes later employment with the Forest Service; their quarters and arrangements at the Camp. In general describes life at a CCC camp that later became a part of the national forest recreation system.

Transcript**Unit ID** /repositories/4/archival_objects/27450**Mixed Materials [1000898334]** 1 (box)**Container** 10 (folder)**Extent** 12 pages**Original VHS****Unit ID** /repositories/4/archival_objects/27560**Moving Images** SA016-VHS-009 (VHS)**Original audiocassette (Tape 1)****Unit ID** /repositories/4/archival_objects/27561**Audio** SA016-CS-017 (Audiocassette)**Original audiocassette (Tape 2)****Unit ID** /repositories/4/archival_objects/27562**Audio** SA016-CS-018 (Audiocassette)**Reverend Mark E. Wolfe interviewed by David W. Benavitch****Unit ID** 16-11**Unit ID** /repositories/4/archival_objects/27451**Unit Date** 1991 April 26**Creator** Wolfe, Mark E., Reverend**Creator** Benavitch, David W.**Scope and Contents**

Records the recollections of Rev. Mark E. Wolfe, a World War II conscientious objector who was assigned to CPS (Civilian Public Service) Camp 29, Lyndhurst/Sherando Lake, Virginia from 1942-44. Describes process used by the draft to assign conscientious objector status. Recalls transport to the Camp and checking in process. Talks about Park officers and Church of the Brethren employees that ran the Camp; and general make-up of the Camp according to various religious groups (Brethren, Methodists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Holiness groups, Catholics). Describes a typical day (roll call, work assignment -- usually on the Parkway or at local farms, lunch and return); forest fire service; time-off; ecumenical church services at the local Mennonite Church; and experiences preaching which eventually led to his being licensed as a preacher for his home congregation following the War. Mentions food and the cooking school for training in quantity cooking; also payment allowances (none from the government; around \$3.00 - \$3.50 per month from the Brethren Church). Talks about various people he met at the Camp including an organ builder who built an organ for the church, an organist, and wood carvers; also his future wife. Mentions rules, regulations and discipline requirements, incl. sign-out/sign-in reporting. Recalls how the whole camp was moved to Bedford, Pennsylvania, in anticipation of the Camp being turned into a POW facility. In general, reminisces about experiences as a conscientious objector during World War II.

Transcript

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27452

Mixed Materials [1000898334] 1 (box)

Container 11 (folder)

Extent 10 pages

Original VHS

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27563

Moving Images SA016-VHS-010 (VHS)

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Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27564

Audio SA016-CS-019 (Audiocassette)

Original audiocassette (Tape 2)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27565

Audio SA016-CS-020 (Audiocassette)

Frank Haga interviewed by David W. Benavitch

Unit ID 16-12

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27566

Creator Haga, Frank

Creator Benavitch, David W.

Access Restrictions

Media for this interview has not been processed and there is no transcript available.

Original VHS

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27567

Moving Images SA016-VHS-011 (VHS)

Garland Priddy interviewed by David W. Benavitch

Unit ID 16-13

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27568

Unit Date 1991 January 22

Creator Priddy, Garland

Creator Benavitch, David W.

Access Restrictions

Media for this interview has not been processed and there is no transcript available.

Original VHS

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27569

Moving Images SA016-VHS-012 (VHS)

Original audiocassette (Tape 2)

Unit ID /repositories/4/archival_objects/27570

Audio SA016-CS-021 (Audiocassette)