

Collection #  
P 0442

## CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS COMPANY 517 PHOTOGRAPHS, CA. 1934

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Processed by

Barbara Quigley  
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Manuscript and Visual Collections Department  
William Henry Smith Memorial Library  
Indiana Historical Society  
450 West Ohio Street  
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

[www.indianahistory.org](http://www.indianahistory.org)

### COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION:	1 folder
COLLECTION DATES:	Ca. 1934
PROVENANCE:	Purchased from Joan Hostetler, Heritage Photo Services, Indianapolis, Ind., in 1999
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NOTES: See also: William M.S. Myers Papers (M 0741)

## HISTORICAL SKETCH

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was created in 1933 to provide jobs for unemployed young men between the ages of 17 and 23 who were U.S. citizens. (This was modified to include older men, too.) They were paid a base salary of \$30 per month, most of which was sent home to their families. The men lived in work camps under the operation of the Department of War. Work that was done included reforestation, construction of fire observation towers, the laying of telephone lines, development of state parks, and the construction of dams, bridges, buildings, and roads. The men gained valuable job skills and were given the opportunity to receive their high school diplomas.

On 17 April 1933, the first CCC camp was established in Virginia. By 1 July there were 275,000 enrollees in 1300 camps across the country. The program was criticized by conservatives and liberals alike for various reasons, but President Franklin Roosevelt saw the CCC as a way to tap two wasted resources: young men and the land. During the Great Depression work and income were scarce, and the land had been impoverished as well by massive deforestation and erosion.

The situation for African Americans during the Depression was especially dire. Unemployment among blacks was twice the national average. Menial jobs previously held by blacks were taken away by whites. Federal relief programs were the only hope for many blacks, but racism in the society at large was also reflected in the CCC. Many whites resisted the emergence of all-black CCC camps in their communities. The number of blacks selected for CCC service was limited, and white supervisors were put in charge of African American camps. Not until 1936 were a few African Americans allowed to be officers and supervisors in the camps.

There were fifty-six CCC companies in the state of Indiana, eight of which were for African Americans only. The largest and longest lasting of the all-black companies was Company 517, which was established in 1934 and consisted of about 250 men. Men joining at that time went to Fort Knox, Kentucky, for training for thirty days; afterwards the company was stationed in Camp S-54, eleven miles southwest of Corydon, Indiana. There CCC members worked on projects in the Harrison-Crawford State Forest in what is now Wyandotte Woods State Recreation Area.

Francis Crowds was a member of Company 517 in Corydon. He recalled that there was a lot of resistance by whites to all-black camps, but that many farmers in southern Indiana were happy to have their help. Crowds said that in the CCC "there was a sense of high expectation. We worked hard and were expected to do it right. We used our muscles... we built barracks, dams, fought forest fires, reclaimed streams, and planted forests. Even though the CCC was one of President Roosevelt's job programs, I never felt I was on welfare."

Company 517 moved to South Bend, Indiana, in 1937, and to Portland, Indiana, in 1939. The work done by this group included work in the limestone and sandstone quarries, construction of a shelter house and manager's quarters, tree planting, and rescue operations in the flood of 1937. During leisure time the men took trips to town, held boxing and softball competitions, and enjoyed music. Company 517 was disbanded in 1941.

The CCC program ended on 30 June 1942, after World War II had strengthened the U.S. economy. The CCC had employed more than three million men nationally, including almost 200,000 blacks and 80,000 Native Americans. Men

in the program had built 3,470 fire towers and 97,000 miles of road. They had protected more than 20 million acres of land from erosion, and planted more than 2.3 billion trees. They had devoted more than four million man-days to fighting fires. The CCC was responsible for removing nearly 15 million families from welfare, and provided the Department of Conservation with labor that was badly needed at the time.

#### Sources:

Center for Democracy and Citizenship, Hubert H. Humphrey Institute for Public Affairs, University of Minnesota. "The Civilian Conservation Corps: Building a Legacy" (<http://www.publicwork.org/pdf/casestudies/CCCfgreen.pdf>). Accessed 20 July 2004.

Indiana Historical Bureau. "Indiana Heritage Research Grants abstracts 1993" (<http://www.statelib.lib.in.us/www/ihb/resources/ihrg93.html>). Accessed 20 July 2004.

Museum of the Soldier. "A Remembrance of the CCC: A Story about Frank Wilson by the *Commercial Review*, October 7, 1994" (<http://www.museumofthesoldier.com/ccccr.htm>). Accessed 20 July 2004.

National Association of Civilian Conservation Corps Alumni. "Roosevelt's Tree Army: A Brief History of the Civilian Conservation Corps" (<http://www.cccalumni.org/history1.html>). Accessed 21 July 2004.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection consists of ten 5x7 black-and-white photographs of Civilian Conservation Corps Company 517 near Corydon, Indiana. Some of the photographs have been dated 1934; the rest were presumably taken around the same time. There is one photo of a wide view of the campgrounds, designated Camp S-54, showing some buildings in the distance. The other nine photographs are group portraits of men serving in Company 517. These include men who worked at the first aid station, men who worked in the mess hall, and men of barracks A, B, C, D, and E. Some men are identified by name.

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The grounds of Camp S-54, near Corydon, Indiana. Lake W. Headley is named as the officer in charge. Photo by Post Exchange Studio of Des Moines, Iowa, n.d.

Three unidentified men in uniform, who appear to be officers, standing outside a building, n.d.

Group portrait outside of a building. Three white men standing in back identified as: Lt. Hadley, Mr. D.N. Hickman, and Lt. Lake W. Headley. Eight black men seated in front identified as: Norman Abel, Frank Franklin, Norway Carpenter, William Gibson, James Woods, Willie Clark, George Crudup, and Albert Laval, n.d.

Unidentified group portrait of three black men and two white men standing outside what appears to be a first aid station, n.d.

Seventeen unidentified black men outside of the

### CONTAINER

Photographs, Folder 1

mess hall, a few are wearing cooks' attire [1934].

Men of "A" barrack, William Myers, leader. Thirty black men outside of a building [1934].

Photographs, Folder 1

Men of "B" barrack, Percy Burns, leader. Eighteen black men outside of a building [1934].

Photographs, Folder 1

Men of "C" barrack, James E. "Tiger" Kiggins, leader. Thirty black men outside of a building [1934].

Photographs, Folder 1

Men of "D" barrack (no leader named). Twenty-six black men outside of a building [1934].

Photographs, Folder 1

Men of "E" barrack, Norman Lee, leader. Twenty-five black men outside of a building [1934].

Photographs, Folder 1

## CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog: <http://opac.indianahistory.org/>
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, P 0442).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.