

TENNESSEE MULTIPLE PROPERTY FORM

TITLE: Historic Resources of Grundy County

COUNTY: Grundy

SITE: 11

HISTORIC NAME: Grundy Lakes Historic District
COMMON NAME: Grundy Lakes State Park and Camp Mountain Lake
ADDRESS: Grundy Lakes State Park
Tracy City Vicinity, Tennessee

OWNER: 1. Department of Conservation
2. Camp Mountain Lake
ADDRESS: 1. Nashville, Tennessee 37219-5237
2. Sewanee, Tennessee 37375

HISTORIC USE: Industry/Recreation CURRENT USE: Recreation
CATEGORY/BUILDING TYPE: Structure
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: various ARCHITECT/BUILDER: various
ORIGINAL SITE: yes MOVED: N/A DATE: N/A
ORIGINAL OWNER/SIGNIFICANT INDIVIDUALS: Tennessee Coal, Iron, and
Railroad Company

HAS THIS PROPERTY BEEN DETERMINED ELIGIBLE? no DATE: N/A

CONTRIBUTING:		NON-CONTRIBUTING:	
buildings	0	buildings	0
structures	2	structures	0
sites	0	sites	0
objects	0	objects	0
TOTAL	2	TOTAL	0

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION AND JUSTIFICATION:

Beginning at a point approximately 600 feet from the Tracy City corporate boundaries on Grundy Lake Road, the boundaries for the Grundy Lakes Historic District generally follows the roadways and contour lines. The district includes four lakes and two groups of coke ovens. See Map #11. The Grundy Lakes Historic District includes sufficient land to protect the remaining batteries of coke ovens and includes sufficient property to convey the natural and historical setting of the recreational facility of Grundy Lakes.

ACREAGE: Approximately 68 acres

UTM REFERENCE: Tracy City, Tennessee 99SW
A: 16/617320/3903670 C: 16/616400/3903180
B: 16/616630/3902850 D: 16/616430/3904140

SUPPLEMENTAL BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES:

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DESCRIPTION:

The Grundy Lakes Historic District is located northeast of Tracy City, one mile east of State Highway 56. The district contains two separate banks of coke ovens built by the Tennessee Coal and Iron Company circa 1883 and four lakes built by the Civilian Conservation Corps between 1938 and 1939. The largest grouping of coke ovens is located on the east side of Grundy Lakes Road and extends approximately 2,100 feet. There are approximately four batteries of coke ovens in various stages of deterioration along the east side of the road. Some of the coke ovens were partially destroyed by the cutting of the roadway between the coke ovens and the lake. The two largest batteries of ovens are located within the boundaries of Grundy Lakes State Park and were cleared of tree growth and brush and are maintained by state park employees. Almost all of the ovens retain the original interior firebrick, but no sandstone facing remains. The southwestern end of this first group of coke ovens is located on the grounds of a private summer camp for children. This smaller battery of ovens sits further off the road and has retained most of its original integrity although the battery is covered by undergrowth and trees and does not appear to receive any maintenance.

The second group of ovens is much smaller and is located in the state park on the opposite side of the lake from the first group of ovens. This small group of ovens, also built c. 1883, is approximately 500 feet long and has been partially cleared of tree growth. Still visible on top of the ovens are some of the trunnel heads or holes used for dumping the coal into the ovens.

There are four lakes included within the district boundaries, one large lake and three smaller lakes. The lakes were constructed in 1938 and 1939 by the Civilian Conservation Corps. The lakes were formed by the building of dams on land that had been donated by the Tennessee Coal and Iron Company. The construction of the lakes and the surrounding recreational area destroyed a portion of the coke ovens built by TCI. However, the remaining coke ovens are an important feature in the recreational area. In recent year the only changes that have occurred at the lakes are the addition of a swimming beach and parking areas.

SIGNIFICANCE:

CRITERIA: A

CONSIDERATION: G

AREA OF SIGNIFICANCE: Industry and Social/Humanitarian

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE/SIGNIFICANT DATES: 1883-1939

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE: Local

The Grundy Lakes Historic District is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under criterion A for its significance in industry and relief programs in Grundy County.

The Tennessee Coal, Iron, and Railroad Company (TCI), the major coal company in Tracy City, expanded their operations in 1883 with the

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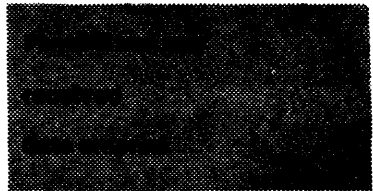
building of approximately 130 coke ovens near Lone Rock (Grundy Lakes). The TCI coke ovens were operated mainly by prisoner labor that TCI leased from the state. The use of prisoners to operate the coke ovens led to many disputes and hard feelings between the coal company and local miners. On August 13, 1892 the free miners in Tracy City marched to the Lone Rock Stockade, removed the company equipment from the stockade, took charge of the prisoners, and then set fire to the stockade, burning it to the ground. The miners placed the prisoners on a freight train to Cowan in an attempt to keep the company from using prison labor. However, within a short time TCI brought the prisoners back to Tracy City and continued to use prison labor until 1896. Although prisoners were no longer used after 1896 labor disputes between the company and miners continued. In 1904 TCI moved all of their mining operations out of Tracy City and sold their land holdings to E. L. Hampton. Hampton formed the the Tennessee Consolidated Coal Company and continued to operate the mines and coke ovens in Tracy City. The coke ovens appear to have been used sporadically until the onset of World War I when the demand for coke increased. The coke ovens were leased by the Sewanee Fuel and Iron during World War I and into the 1920s. The ovens were completely out of production by 1935.

In the mid 1930's, Tennessee Consolidated Coal donated the land the coke ovens were located on to the state for development of a recreational area. During the Depression Grundy County was one of eleven counties in the United States with the highest relief rates, with over 72% of the work force on relief. By the late 1930's, the major industries of the county, mining and lumbering, were for the most part completely shut down. The donation of land to the state for the development of a recreational area provided a major boost to the county's depressed economy by providing jobs for the unemployed through relief programs. Grundy Lakes were built by the Civilian Conservation Corps, an important relief program during the depression.

The Grundy Lakes Historic District contains two important elements of Grundy County's economic history. The Coke Ovens are a reminder of a prosperous mining industry that built most of the county's communities. The lakes, although not yet fifty years old, are important to the county for their role in the rebuilding of an extremely poor county through relief programs by directing its main economic stability away from the depleted resource industries and towards the new industry of recreation. The Civilian Conservation Corps worked on several other projects in Grundy County. However, Grundy Lakes is the only project to retain integrity.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet Historic Resources of
Grundy County

Item number 10

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