

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90
Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
5	10	buildings
1	1	sites
0	1	structures
1	0	objects
7	12	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

GOVERNMENT: Other

DOMESTIC: Camp

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION & CULTURE: Outdoor Recreation

DOMESTIC: Camp

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

NO STYLE

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: STONE

walls: WOOD

roof: METAL

other: _____

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90

Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York

County and State

Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

According to Martin Podskoch, Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) historian who has published surveys of camps in New York and New England, CCC Camp Speculator (S-90) is the “only CCC camp in New York State that is still intact.”¹ It retains the identity for which it is significant because successor 4-H Camp Sacandaga believed that the history of the CCC and preservation of the CCC buildings were important parts of their own mission to build a strong sense of citizenship in rural youth. The entrance gates and flag pole are critical elements of the site, setting the tone for both the CCC and 4-H programs. Three of the five surviving buildings are particularly well preserved in terms of their design, materials, and workmanship. The orientation of the overall site – CCC structures on the north, 4-H cabins on the south – preserves the sense of place associated with both organizations, each of which is historically significant in its own way.

Narrative Description

Site

The current sixteen-acre site of Camp Sacandaga contains the land historically leased for CCC Camp Speculator (S-90) and the land purchased by 4-H Camp Sacandaga in 1967.² In 1933, the first CCC camp in Lake Pleasant (Camp S-59; also known as Camp 11) was located on state land closer to Moffitt Beach on Page Street. However, that fall, the site was abandoned – perhaps due to its swampy topography or lack of electric service. In 1934, the CCC program was reestablished on the current site, which was cleared, flatter, and better drained, having been used as farm land from the initial settlement of the Town of Lake Pleasant and as a drill ground during the Civil War. An easement to New York Power and Light Corporation dated July 12, 1934, shows that electricity was brought into the site that summer.

Today, most of the site is mowed, with specimen trees sheltering the entrance, former CCC Barracks, and center of the camp. Other parts of the site are completely forested. In particular, trees have been allowed to grow close to the CCC buildings on the north side of the site with a wooded barbeque pit immediately west of the Dining Hall (former CCC Education Building).

Building List

The buildings can be divided into three groups: CCC buildings (1934); early 4-H Camp Sacandaga buildings (circa 1972-1977); late 4-H Camp and Camp Tekoa buildings (after 2000). **All of the surviving CCC resources are contributing**; the early 4-H Camp resources are non-contributing due solely to age; the late 4-H Camp and Camp Tekoa buildings are non-contributing as they are least identified with the period of significance. The names of the CCC buildings are taken from an undated map of the CCC site (Figure 24) showing buildings and utilities;³ Camp Sacandaga and Camp Tekoa have applied their own names to most of the buildings.⁴

¹ Martin Podskoch, *Adirondack Civilian Conservation Corps Camps; History, Memories & Legacy of the CCC* (East Hampton, CT: Podskoch Press, 2011), 246.

² In 2016, the site is being run as “Camp Sacandaga” (no 4-H affiliation) by a former director of 4-H Camp Sacandaga.

³ Due to the representation of Barracks #4 as lost, the map probably dates from the Army turnover of the site (1942-1945).

⁴ The 2016 Camp Sacandaga cabin names have reverted those of 4-H Camp Sacandaga.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90
Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York
County and State

Date	CCC Name	4-H Camp Sacandaga Name	Camp Tekoa Name	Current Size	Notes
1934	Gates	Gates	Gates	Site	All these resources are contributing CONTRIBUTING OBJECT: The original gate posts were repaired around 2014 and a commemorative sign hung to celebrate CCC Camp Speculator.
1934	Flag Pole	Flag Circle	Flag Pole	Site	CONTRIBUTING SITE: The 4-H Camp made a special point of maintaining the CCC Flag Pole and requiring campers to use the space respectfully.
1934	Building #6: Recreation Hall <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Wing • East Wing (Canteen) 	Recreation Hall <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreation Hall Stage • Camp Store and Infirmary 	Recreation Hall <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreation Hall Stage • Camp Store and Infirmary 	30' x 48' 20' x 24' 20' x 44'	CONTRIBUTING BUILDING: The Recreation Building (with its two wings) is the least changed large CCC structure. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The date of the stage is unknown. - The CCC canteen counter and shelves were removed in 2010 but the function of the space remains the same. An infirmary was added to the east end of the wing in 1984.
1934	Building #3: Forestry Quarters	Girls' Bath House	Girls' Bath House	20' x 30'	CONTRIBUTING BUILDING: This building appears to have been cut down and converted into bath facilities for the girls' cabins; it was originally 20' by 78'.
1934	Building # 5: Lavatory <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Latrine 	Boys' Bath House Manor House	Boys' Bath House Unnamed	20' x 52' 12' x 30'	CONTRIBUTING BUILDING: The exterior and function of this building remain the same since the CCC period. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The "Manor House" has been used for storage since at least the middle of the 4-H Camp period.
1934	Building #17: Education Building <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library Wing 	Dining Hall <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kitchen 	Dining Hall <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kitchen • Screen Porch 	26' x 60' 15' x 10' 15' x 12'	CONTRIBUTING BUILDING: The Education Building originally had two wings. The west wing may have been removed around 1971 when the roof collapsed due to snow load and was replaced. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The east wing held the CCC library; in 1979, an addition was added to the wing for food storage (probably after the roof collapse and loss of the west wing). - A screen porch was added to the front of the building in 2014 as part of the development of Camp Tekoa.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90

Hamilton Co, New York

Name of Property

County and State

1934	Building 10: Barracks #1	Cabin 9/10	Kingfisher	20' x 45'	CONTRIBUTING BUILDING: Barracks #1 was used by the 4-H camp in its entirety until 1972 when half of the building was taken down. Cabin 21 replaced the lost bed space.
Early 4-H Camp Buildings – These buildings are non-contributing due to age					
1972		Cabin 21	Falcon	16' x 24'	NON-CONTRIBUTING BUILDING: Cabin 21 replaced the lost bed space when Barracks #1 (Cabins 9/10) was truncated. Subsequent 4-H cabins refined this prototype.
1973		Cabin 1	Sandpiper	14' x 28"	NON-CONTRIBUTING BUILDING: Cabins 1-3 were built by the Glens Falls Seabees around 1973; these cabins replaced a CCC building (probably Building #2: Officers Quarters) which had been used as a girls' dorm.
1973		Cabin 2	Meadowlark	14' x 28"	NON-CONTRIBUTING BUILDING: Cabins 1-3 were built by the Glens Falls Seabees around 1973; these cabins replaced a CCC building (probably Building #2: Officers Quarters) which had been used as a girls' dorm.
1973		Cabin 3	Goldfinch	14' x 28"	NON-CONTRIBUTING BUILDING: Cabins 1-3 were built by the Glens Falls Seabees around 1973; these cabins replaced a CCC building (probably Building #2: Officers Quarters) which had been used as a girls' dorm.
1976		Cabin 4	Swallow	14' x 28"	NON-CONTRIBUTING BUILDING: Cabins 4-5 were built by the Glens Falls Seabees around 1976.
1976		Cabin 5	Wippowill	14' x 28"	NON-CONTRIBUTING BUILDING: Cabins 4-5 were built by the Glens Falls Seabees around 1976.
1977		Cabin 0	Chickadee	14' x 28"	NON-CONTRIBUTING BUILDING: Cabin 0 was built by the Glens Falls Seabees around 1977.
1979	CCC Building T-1 (demolished)	Seabee Lodge	Hilton	24' x 40'	NON-CONTRIBUTING BUILDING: A CCC building near the camp gates (probably T-1: Garage) was demolished around 1979 and replaced with an office built by the Glens Falls Seabees; the building was dedicated to the Seabees in 1982.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90
 Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York
 County and State

		• Annex	22' x 28'	- Screened porch and annex with additional living space added as part of the development of Camp Tekoa.
1979	Barbeque Area	Barbeque Area	Site	NON-CONTRIBUTING SITE: The "R. Smith Memorial Bar-B-Que Cover-up" was built in 1979 to spoof a camp director who hated to grill.
Late 4-H Camp/ Camp Tekoa Buildings – These resources are non-contributing				
2002	Cabin 7	Owl	16' x 24'	NON-CONTRIBUTING BUILDING: Cabin built with T1-11 siding around 2002.
2002	Cabin 8	Bluejay	16' x 24'	NON-CONTRIBUTING BUILDING: Cabin built with T1-11 siding around 2002.
2014		Pool	Site	NON-CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURE: Pool replaced the old CCC Infirmary (Building 4) which had been used by the 4-H Camp as staff quarters after 1984.

A color-coded map shows the location of the buildings on the site:

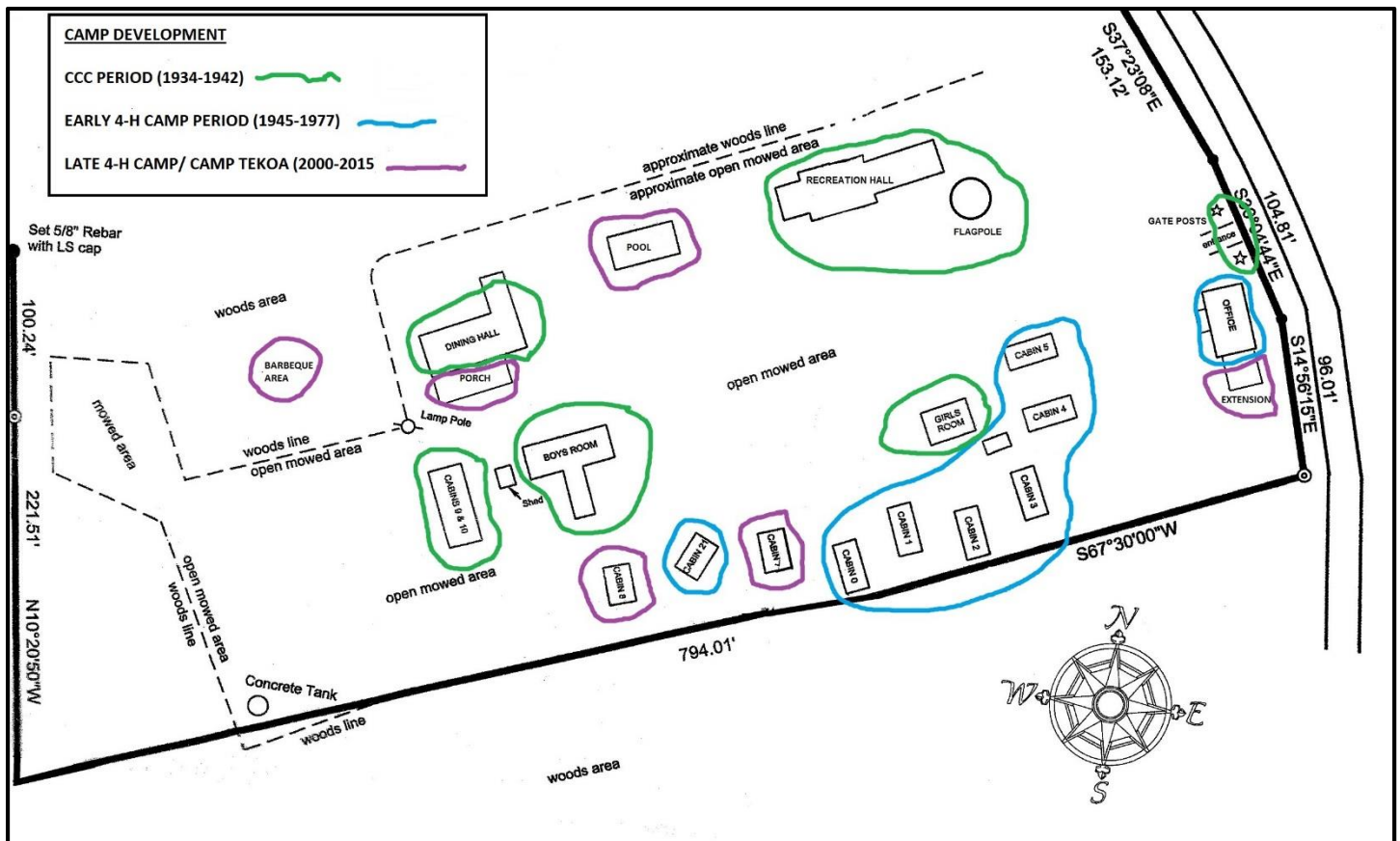


Figure 1. Current Site Map with color-coded buildings

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90
Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York
County and State

CCC Buildings

The CCC Camp Speculator resources all contribute to the nomination and are described separately. The buildings were all built at the same time in 1934, using plans developed for the CCC by the Army (Second Military Corps) which ran the camps. (These plans will be discussed in more detail in Part 8, Criterion C.)

Six common design elements identify the CCC buildings. First, their siding is board and batten; later buildings used waney-edge/live-edge siding or T1-11 plywood. Second, since the camp was not expected to last, none of the buildings has a foundation; all rest on piles. Third, roofs are metal. Fourth, squared awning windows are used on all buildings. Fifth, the buildings share a common roof truss system that is exposed on the interiors. Sixth, CCC Camp Speculator was oriented along a central service road with programmatic buildings on the north, and barracks, lavatories, and the mess hall on the south. The surviving CCC resources maintain this orientation with a mix of both programmatic and service buildings. As a result, the character of the site retains much of the feeling and setting of the CCC period, with the later buildings oriented along a secondary axis.

Gates: The camp gates erected during the CCC period have been maintained since the site was turned over to the 4-H by the U.S. Army in 1945. The posts were repaired around 2014. The sign has been replaced several times, and the current sign celebrates the CCC camp.



Figure 2. Camp Speculator (S-90) Gates, late 1930s.
Adirondack Museum.



Figure 3. Camp Speculator (S-90) Gates, 2016.

The pyramidal gate posts are clapboarded (with corner boards) and sit on a cobblestone foundation. Each post is surmounted with a round white glass lamp, decorated with an evergreen tree. (The lamps held clover-leaves, the symbol of the 4-H, during the Camp Sacandaga period.) Simple pole supports run between the two posts to hold the sign for the camp.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90
Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York
County and State



Flag Pole – (term from map): The area around the flag pole was an important site for camp life during both the CCC and 4-H camp periods. The pole itself has been replaced at least once, but the circle of white-washed stones is believed to date from the 1930s and was protected by the 4-H Camp administration. There is an opening on the north side of the circle, providing access to the pole. To promote respect for the flag and the CCC enrollees who had lived at the camp, 4-H campers were not allowed on the “flag circle” unless they were part of the flag detail.⁵

Figure 4: Flag Pole site, 2016. Also known as the “Flag Circle” by 4-H Camp Sacandaga.

Building #6: Recreation Hall: The one-story Recreation Hall is the most intact of the large CCC buildings. The building has been used for group recreation since it was built and consists of a large open room in the center (30’ x 48’) with two extensions. The west wing (20’ x 24’) is open to the central room, raised slightly above floor level, and holds a stage. The east wing (20’ x 44’) is closed off from the central room and subdivided into two parts. The first part is the former CCC canteen; the second part was added in 1984 and holds the relocated camp infirmary. As a result, the east wing is substantially longer than the west wing.



Figure 5. Recreation Hall, Façade, 2016.



Figure 6. Recreation Hall, Rear, 2016.

⁵ Information from Jim Tavares, former director, 4-H Camp Speculator (March, 2016).

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90

Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York

County and State

The façade (south elevation) of the central block has five bays, with a central door and two windows on each side. The board and batten siding is original, as are the squared awning windows with three-over-three wood sash. The original roof was metal and lacked returns or gutters; a standing-seam steel roof was added around 2012. A short ventilating tower at the center of the roof now holds a loudspeaker to organize camp activities. The decorative shutters using the pine-tree motif of the original CCC camp appear to be replacements, but may follow an original design.⁶ Both wings are lower than the central block. The west wing has two short, horizontal windows, and the part of the east wing that contained the canteen has two similar windows and a door at grade. The infirmary addition extends the line of the canteen wing but has a step-up door (marked with a red cross) and a late twentieth-century window.

The side elevations of the recreation hall are simple; there are no corner posts and the board and batten siding extends to the peak of the roof. There is a door on the end of the west wing and two windows on the end of the east wing.

The rear (north) elevation is similar in all respects to the façade with the exception of a large stone chimney in the place of the central front door. The chimney is topped with a vent.



Figure 7. Interior, Recreation Hall (north), 2016. Photo from Jim Tavares. Note fireplace at right.

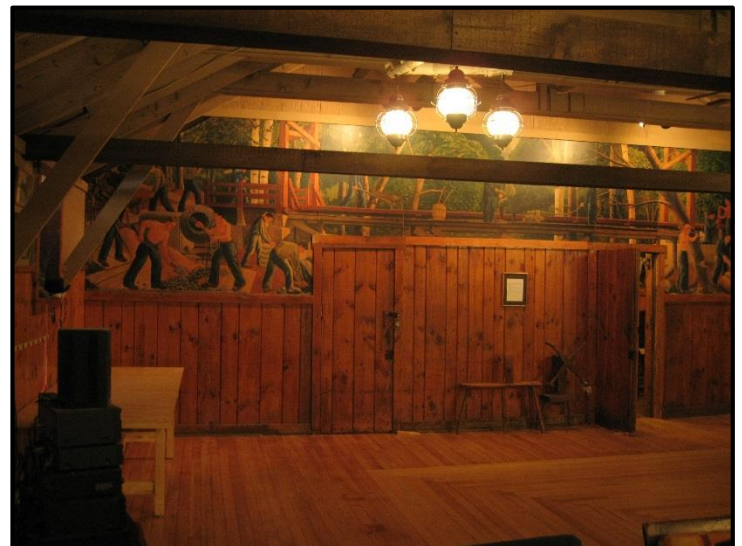


Figure 8. Replacement CCC Mural, Recreation Hall (east), 2016.

The interior of the central block is distinguished by the fireplace, pattern of open trusses, and mural of CCC enrollees building a bridge. The fireplace is situated in the middle of the rear (north) wall between two of the roof braces. The stonework extends up to the bottom third of the adjoining windows with a relatively narrow stone mantel. Originally, the fireplace burned logs; a soapstone stove now fills the opening and sits on a raised pad. The second feature of interest is the roof structure. All the CCC buildings built by the Second Military Corps used open trusses to frame the roof. These trusses are open to the peak and create a rhythmic effect, which the children's camps accented with flags and banners. The third element of note is the mural on the east wall of the central room. The original was donated to the Adirondack Museum in the 1980s, and the museum gave the 4-H Council a photographic replacement. The original mural was constructed to go around and above

⁶ All of the superintendent cabins built by the CCC at public campgrounds use a similar pine tree motif, but placed higher in the shutters.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90

Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York

County and State

two doorways and the roof trusses. When Camp Speculator was sold in 2010, another camp purchased the reproduction mural but returned it to Camp Tekoa.

The west wing contains a simple stage. This part of the building is raised about 8” above the level of the central room and the opening into the center room permits access to the stage from the sides and exterior. The camp store in the east wing contains a wood counter built in the style of the original CCC canteen counter. (It is much simpler but follows the general contour.) The original CCC canteen counter was removed in 2010 when the 4-H held an auction before selling the property. The 1984 infirmary addition is divided into four rooms – two bedrooms, bathroom, and office for the camp nurse.

Building #3: Forestry Quarters: The Camp S-90 site plan shows “FOR. QT’RS.” on the site of the current Girls’ Bath House. Former 4-H camp director, Jim Tavares, states that several CCC buildings were used in the early days of the children’s camp, with the girls in Dorm 1 (Officers’ Quarters, now gone) and Dorm 2 which “had been attached to the girl’s bathroom.” The residential half of Dorm 2 was removed when the first 4-H building campaign began in the early 1970s, but the bathroom section was saved.



Figure 9. Entrance to Girls’ Bath House showing how building was cut down, 2016



Figure 10. Girls’ Bath House (half of former Forestry Quarters), 2016

From its current dimensions (20’ x 30’), the one-story building has clearly been truncated from its original size (20’ x 76’). The current building opens to the east on the gable end, with a single door opening off a sheltered porch where the building was cut. However, the building still retains fair integrity as a CCC resource. The original board and batten can be seen under the waney-edge/ live-edge siding added to the building in the 1970s to make it blend in with the new cabins. The roof is flat, seamed metal. The side elevations each have three bays with the characteristic squared awning windows and wood sash of the Recreation Hall. The interior maintains part of the central corridor visible in the CCC floor plans. The rear of the building has no openings, due to the lineup of showers against the inner wall. On the interior, the original roof trusses survive; an off-center hole in the ceiling shows where the camp stovepipe exited through the roof.

Building #5: Lavatory and Latrine: The CCC Lavatory remains intact and continues to be used for its original function – showers and personal hygiene. The back wing (attached to the middle of the building) originally held a group latrine, but is now used for storage. (The lack of privacy acceptable in a quasi-military camp like the Civilian Conservation Corps was unacceptable in a children’s camp.)

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90
Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York
County and State



Figure 11. Lavatory (now Boys Bath House), Façade, 2016.



Figure 12. Lavatory (at left) with Latrine wing at rear, 2016.

The one-story building retains its original dimensions (20' x 52' along the façade, with a rear latrine wing of 12' x 30'). The north-facing façade is five bays wide with a small enclosed porch protecting the central door and two flanking windows on each side. On the side elevations, there are two large vents (originally windows) in the gable end on the east and a door in the gable end on the west. The rear elevation has four bays (including the latrine wing), with two windows on the east and a single five-panel wood door on the west. The latrine itself has three windows on its east elevation, another five-panel door and two windows on its west elevation, and a five-panel door in its south-facing gable. The concrete support for the CCC latrine remains preserved under the wing (known to the 4-H Camp as the "Manor Hall.") The building displays the common CCC characteristics – board and batten siding, piers, metal roof, squared awning windows with three-over-three wood sash, and open roof trusses in the latrine.

Building #17: Education Building and Library Wing: The Education Building was apparently converted into the dining hall for 4-H Camp Speculator in 1945. No reference is made to the original Mess Hall as a programmatic space in contemporary newspaper articles, and it is missing from a 1953 aerial view of the camp.⁷ In addition, the former 4-H camp director had no knowledge that the dining hall was once in a different location.

The Education Building originally had two wings – the east wing was the library and the west wing may have been the Education Officer's quarters. The core of the building survives but the west wing has been lost. The roof collapsed around 1971 and was replaced with a new metal roof and new truss system; this may date the removal of the wing as well.

Nonetheless, the one-story building retains its identity as a CCC resource. The south-facing façade has been obscured by the addition of a screen porch in 2014 but remains unaltered. It is six bays wide, with two sets of double sliding windows in the center, flanking doors, and a single flanking double window at each end. (The screen porch encloses the area between the doors.) The east elevation includes the library wing and an extension to the wing built in 1979 for kitchen storage. It is four bays wide – the two-bay gable end holds a double sliding

⁷ Aerial view, copyright HistoricAerials.com.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90

Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York

County and State

window in the center and double door to the north; the library wing holds one window; and the wall of the storage area is blank but distinguished from the rest of the elevation by a change in siding. The west elevation is three bays wide with a door (with ramp) between a set of double sliding windows on each side and a large vent in the peak. The rear (north) elevation of the center block holds three sets of double sliding windows (no doors). The east (side) and north (rear) elevations of the library wing and storage area lack openings, but differ in their siding. The library wing is covered with board and batten while the storage area is sided with fiberboard.



Figure 13. Former CCC Education Building in 2010 before addition of 2014 screen porch. These features are now obscured but remain intact. Photo from Caroline Naysmith.

The interior of the central block of the CCC Education Building remains an open programmatic space, though with dining tables rather than desks. Only the east end of the building has been changed by the addition of the kitchen. Despite changes, the Education Building retains many of the CCC features – board and batten siding, metal (replacement) roof, three-over-three sash (doubled in the sliding windows), and open trusses – and much of the character of the Recreation Hall, the other large building on the site.

Building 10: Barracks #1: Barracks #1 was one of five identical barracks at the west end of the camp. The original barracks buildings were 20' x 112,' ten bays wide, with an undivided central space reached through a main entrance in the north gable facing the service road. Like the lavatory, these entrances were protected with small enclosed porches (now replaced with an open porch). There was an additional door in the rear (south) gable and ten square awning windows on each side. (A few barracks had additional side doors.)

One barracks (#4) was lost to fire in 1942, but the rest survived the war. However, most of the surviving barracks were surplus to the needs of the 4-H camp program. A 1945 auction – held shortly after the transfer of the buildings from the army and before the opening of the camp – notes the sale of several buildings. The 1953 aerial photograph shows only Barracks #1 remaining on the site. The building, originally 20' x 45', was subdivided and known to thirty years of boys at 4-H Camp Speculator as Cabins 9-12. In 1972, the building was truncated when the south end (Cabins 11-12) was removed. (Cabin 21 replaced the missing space.) Barracks #1 now measures 20' x 45' with its main door in the north gable end; six bays with windows on the side elevation to the east; seven bays (six windows plus a door inserted by the 4-H Camp) on the side elevation to the west; and no openings on the south.

Nonetheless, the building continues to typify the barracks experience of the CCC campers. Enlistees lived communally in groups of 40 and needed to learn to share their common space. Individuals had trunks for

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90

Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York

County and State

personal items, just as subsequent 4-H campers were given lockers. In the 1930s, the space was heated by two potbelly stoves, one at each end of the room; one stove pipe exit can still be seen in the ceiling.

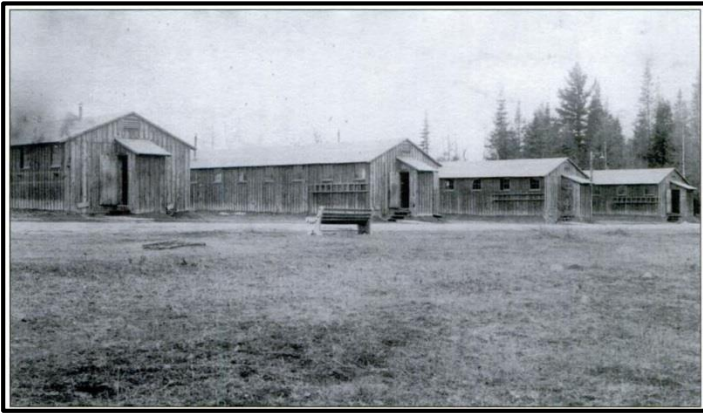


Figure 14. CCC Barracks #2-4, late 1930s, looking west.



Figure 15. CCC Barracks #1 (later, 4-H Camp Speculator Cabins 9-10), 2016, looking east.

The interior feeling of the barracks is particularly evocative of the CCC period and way of life.



Figures 16-17. Interior, CCC Barracks #1 (4-H Camp Speculator Cabins 9-10), 2016. Note windows, open truss system, and framed vent for the stovepipe.



4-H Camp Sacandaga Buildings: The early 4-H Camp Sacandaga cabins are less than fifty years and thus not yet contributing. Nonetheless, they are also of note for their association with the 4-H program and will be briefly discussed.

When the Tri-County 4-H Council received the CCC buildings from the army in 1945, they did not receive the land the buildings were sitting on. The property was leased from the estate of Charles Letsen subject to the life interest of his heirs. When Letsen's sister died in the mid-1950s, the estate could finally be settled. However, it took another ten years to distribute the assets among the heirs (and subsequent purchasers). The 4-H was finally

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90

Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York

County and State

able to buy the land in November, 1967. It had not invested much in the maintenance of the CCC buildings while it lacked ownership of the land, so the first order of business was dealing with deferred maintenance. In the early 1970s, the Camp Corporation began to redevelop the south part of the site.

The first building to be constructed, Cabin 21, became the prototype for Cabins 0-5, which were built a few years later by the Glens Falls Seabees. These early 4-H cabins are positioned facing north along a secondary axis through Camp Sacandaga, parallel to the south property line. They use waney-edge/ live-edge siding, cut to show the cross-sectional dimensions of a tree.⁸ The gable ends (façade and rear elevation) have three bays – a door with two smaller side windows. The side elevations have one bay each, filled with a long, horizontal central window. The campers all slept in one room – 16' x 24' in Cabin 21 and 14' x 28' in the subsequent six cabins. The smaller, more separate spaces allowed the campers to bond more with their age group.

Like the buildings on the rest of the site, the roofs are metal and the foundations are concrete piles.



Figure 18. Cabin 0 (Chickadee), built 1977 as the last of the seven cabins built soon after purchase of the camp land, 2016.



Figure 19. Camp Sacandaga cabins lined up along the south axis of the site, 2016.

Around 1979, the Glens Falls Seabees also built an administration building along Page Road to the south of the gates. This building was dedicated to the Seabees in 1982 as Seabee Lodge.

Later 4-H and Camp Tekoa Buildings: The last two 4-H cabins on the site (7 and 8) were built in 2002. They are slightly broader than the first set of 4-H cabins and covered with T1-11 siding. In 2014, during the development of Camp Tekoa, an addition was constructed on Seabee Lodge and a handicapped-accessible pool was built on the site of the original CCC Infirmary.

⁸ Such siding was also extremely popular in New York State parks.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90
Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90

Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York

County and State

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

SOCIAL HISTORY

ARCHITECTURE

RECREATION

Period of Significance

1934-1966

Significant Dates

1934 – Camp S-90 opened

1942 – Camp S-90 closed

1945 – 4-H took ownership

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Period of Significance (justification): 1934 – 1966: Opening of CCC Camp (S-90) on this site in Lake Pleasant to fifty years from present.

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90 (Speculator) is significant at the state level under **Criterion A: Social History** and **Recreation** and **Criterion C: Architecture** as the most intact surviving Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp in New York State.⁹ The first CCC camp in Lake Pleasant – Camp 11/S-59 – opened on June 18, 1933, less than three months after Congress authorized the national program. A tent camp, it was established on state land and closed in the fall when its men were transferred to a year-round camp in Chenango County, NY. CCC Camp S-90 (Speculator) opened the following May on nearby private land with Company 2206 of World War I veterans. Over the summer and fall, most of the buildings associated with the camp were constructed by local labor. On October 25, 1935, the veterans were replaced by Company 1208 of “juniors” – men aged 17-28. This company remained at Lake Pleasant until the camp (and almost all remaining CCC camps in New York State) closed in late November, 1941. In the eight years of Camp Speculator, the CCC enrollees built and improved facilities at seven state campgrounds, reforested state land, eradicated host plants associated with blister rust, fought forest fires, and searched for missing persons. Despite the fact that only five buildings and two sites survive to represent the CCC’s occupation of the site, the relatively rarity of this camp – no other concentration of CCC buildings survives with this degree of integrity in New York – combined with the enormous importance of the CCC in the history of the state and the development of the state campground system, makes the site eligible for the National Register. In addition, the buildings that survive represent both the public and domestic functions of the camp and retain their original locations, form, materials and designs. The architectural plans and amount of historic documentation related to the operation of this camp further enhance our understanding of CCC Camp Speculator and its significance to the community and to the development of New York State recreation facilities.

⁹ Podskoch, 246.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90
Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York
County and State

The site is additionally significant at the local level under criterion A in recreation for its association with the 4-H movement and its camping program. The 4-H was an outgrowth of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's efforts to preserve agriculture in the United States and, specifically, the 1914 Smith-Lever Act, which established the national Cooperative Extension System. Though not focused on agriculture per se, the camping program was intended to teach rural youth the skills and values of leadership and good citizenship. After World War II, the army transferred the camp buildings to the 4-H Clubs of Fulton, Montgomery, and Herkimer Counties, and those clubs negotiated a new rental agreement with the private land owner. The 4-H acquired the land in 1967 and subsequently built additional cabins better suited to a youth camp. The complex continued as 4-H Club Camp Speculator until closure in 2004.

The period of significance runs from 1934 (CCC camp established on the property) to 1966 (fifty years from the present). Today, five buildings, the flag circle, and entrance gate remain from the CCC period; eight buildings and one site survive from the first building campaign of the 4-H camp; and two buildings and the pool survive from subsequent 4-H and Camp Tekoa campaigns. The early buildings of the 4-H Camp that subsequently took over the property will be reevaluated for significance when they reach 50 years of age.

Site and Context

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) established a camp on Page Street, Town of Lake Pleasant, Hamilton County, in June, 1933. This first tent camp was called CCC Camp S-59 and was located on state land that is now part of Moffitt Beach Campground; it closed in the fall.¹⁰ A second camp, CCC Camp S-90, created more permanent quarters on land owned by Charles Letson. Its buildings were erected in 1934, using plans drawn up for CCC camps administered by the Second Military Corps.



Figure 20. Southern part of the Town of Lake Pleasant. Detail from Asher & Adams, "Herkimer, Hamilton, and Montgomery Counties," *New Topographical Atlas and Gazetteer of New York* (NY: Asher & Adams, 1871).

¹⁰ It was also known for a short time as Camp 11, as identified in a contemporary article in the *New York Sun* – Malcolm Johnson, "White Collar Men and Artisans Work Side by Side in Forests," July 7, 1933, 3.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90
Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York
County and State

Hamilton County: In 1816, Hamilton County was split off Montgomery County but retained “provisional status” until 1837 when it finally gained full status as a county. The lag was due to its slow growth. Initially, it was supposed to become independent when it contained sufficient taxable residents (1,288) to vote for its own member of the assembly. That had not yet happened by the late 1830s, but the State Legislature believed it would happen soon, as new roads, canals, and railroads were proposed for the area.¹¹ Unfortunately, the county’s transportation infrastructure never developed fully; even today, some residents are forced to travel through other counties to go north-south. In 2010, the population was 4,836, making Hamilton the least populated county in New York State.¹²

Lake Pleasant: The Town of Lake Pleasant is in the lower part of Township 2 of the Totten and Crossfield Purchase. The land was surveyed for subdivision before the Revolution, but the deal fell through; after the war, the property was made available to the remaining members of the original consortium of purchasers.¹³ One of the earliest landowners was Ogden Hoffman who acquired Lot 7 (part of which became Camp Speculator almost 140 years later.) However, he and the rest of the original grantees seem to have soon sold their interests to others. The first settler in Lake Pleasant was Francis Courtney, who moved to the area from Ulster County in 1794 to take up another lot. He went back to Ulster County sometime before 1800, but his sons returned to the south side of Lake Pleasant around fifteen years later. In the meantime, Joseph and Livia Spier moved to the eastern edge of Lake Pleasant in 1795. The same year, Thomas Foster built a sawmill nearby. The Spiers built a gristmill in 1797, the year their daughter Olivia was born – the first settler birth in the township. Over the next few years, more settlers arrived (many from New England), and in 1805 Joseph Spier helped organize the Town of Wells, the first township in Hamilton County, out of which the Town of Lake Pleasant was formed in 1812. Subsistence farming brought more settlers, but Philip Rhinelander Jr. was the first to see the possibilities for a grander way of life. In 1815, he developed an estate on Elm Lake with a sawmill, gristmill, manor house, mahogany woodwork, elegant furniture, paintings, barns, creamery, orchards (apples, plums, and pears), vineyard, and cemetery where his African-American servants could bury their dead.¹⁴

In 1820, the population of Lake Pleasant was 312. However, the fertility of the land had already begun to decline, and 30 percent of the residents left in the next five years. By 1825, the population was only 235 – with fifty-five farmers, five mechanics, one sawmill, one gristmill, and one ashery (for producing lye and potash). The economy was marginal and people traded beaver, marten, and muskrat furs for extra money.¹⁵ Nonetheless, a small village had begun to form near the inlet from Sacandaga Lake. An inn opened in Lake Pleasant in 1813 and the first store in 1817. In 1838, one of the first tasks of the new Hamilton County Board of Supervisors was to decide on the county seat. The board was unable to come to a majority decision so the State Legislature appointed three commissioners, who chose Lake Pleasant in 1839. Land for county buildings was purchased in 1841, and a frame courthouse with Greek Revival portico and a brick county clerk’s office were erected in 1843. A fieldstone jail (NR listed, 1992) was authorized in 1847.¹⁶ Stonemason and mason Josiah Moffitt (whose land became the Moffitt Beach Campground) constructed the foundation for both the courthouse and

¹¹ Frederick C. Aber and Stella King, *History of Hamilton County* (Boonville, NY: Willard Press, 1965), 32, 47.

¹² “Hamilton County, New York: Historical Population,” *Wikipedia*.

¹³ David Yehling Allen, *The Mapping of New York State: A Study in the History of Cartography* [Digital Edition] (2011).

¹⁴ Aber and King, 624-627. Reputedly, Rhineland also kept his wife (a daughter of Ogden Hoffman) a virtual prisoner at Elm Lake until she died in 1818. He left for New York City in 1823 after a bout of paralysis, and the house soon became the first in the Town of Lake Pleasant to be haunted as well.

¹⁵ Aber and King, 629.

¹⁶ The original courthouse and county clerk’s office were replaced in 1929; the new buildings were also listed on the National Register in 1992.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90

Hamilton Co, New York

Name of Property

County and State

clerk's office. When the original contractor for the jail defaulted, Moffitt built that building in its entirety. In 1842, Hezekiah Sage of Chittenango (Madison County) bought most of the village plat and built a new hotel. Soon after, the community was renamed Sageville, the name it held until 1897.¹⁷

Sage's new hotel catered to a new type of visitor who was beginning to discover the Town of Lake Pleasant's natural resources. The Piseco Lake Trout Club wrote of visiting in 1843 and 1846, and a newspaperman, C.W. Webber, wrote dispatches in 1848 praising the fishing.¹⁸ Although mixed agriculture remained central, so began the development of the area as a paradise for people interested in sport and recreation. Fishing, boating, hiking, summer vacations, and (eventually) winter sports became the basis of the local economy, and ever-more comfortable hotels developed to serve the visitors, who could leave New York City on the night boat to Albany, take the morning train to Amsterdam and an afternoon stage to Northville, and reach Lake Pleasant by mail coach the following noon.¹⁹ The state Commissioner of Fisheries opened a fish hatchery in 1887 at Mill Creek (off Round Lake) to sustain sport fishing. By 1892, there were six hotels, inns, or boarding houses in what soon became the village of Speculator, and two in the hamlet of Lake Pleasant. Much of the lumber came from the area and was milled locally, as more residents began to specialize as woodsmen, mill workers, and carpenters.

In the 1890s, visitors began to buy land and build their own cottages on lakefront lots. Private clubs also began to develop. By the turn of the century, the economy of the Town of Lake Pleasant had become more diverse and dependent on summer people. Personal automobiles soon brought more of them (which required the town and county to invest in better roads), and small steam launches began to appear on the lakes. "Camp-of-the-Woods," the first – and still the largest – Christian camp in the area, was founded in 1914 by George Tibbits. Other public camps followed for families and children.

Eventually, the abundance of visitors led to a scarcity of fish. Many trout streams were closed by the Conservation Department in 1919 and 1921 to give stocks time to reproduce. But still, people came, admired the scenery, and stayed in the hotels or bought cottage lots. By 1926, the tax-paying owners of summer cottages outnumbered the permanent residents by a margin of 56 to 44 percent. The late 1920s were very prosperous, and this prosperity allowed individuals, the community of Lake Pleasant, and the state to invest in infrastructure. The New York State Conservation Department acquired Moffitt Beach as part of its acquisitions to enlarge the Forest Preserve. Unfortunately, much changed when the Depression took hold after 1930.

Page Road: George Wright from Caughnawaga, Montgomery County, bought all or part of Ogden Hoffman's lot 7 prior to 1806; in 1812, he became first town supervisor and opened the first inn.²⁰ He owned the site of Camp Speculator until at least 1826 and is next recorded living in Wells in 1830. In 1805, Ephraim Page came from Albany County to settle on Page Hill. The precursor to Page Road was surveyed and laid out in 1806, beginning "at a certain Hemlock tree standing by the road on George Wright's farm and running north..." and the whole route from Lake Pleasant to Lake Speculator was in existence by 1807.²¹ A little later, Henry and Sally Burton of Connecticut bought fifty acres on Lake Speculator bordering a small inlet from Echo Lake. The adjoining farm, at the end of Page Road, was bought by stonemason Josiah Moffitt in 1835. He helped build the courthouse complex in the 1840s and ran a bowl factory at the inlet in the 1850s. Tragically, his wife and two

¹⁷ Aber and King, 47-51.

¹⁸ Later that summer, his mood changed and he criticized the local guides and hotels.

¹⁹ Aber and King, 637. It took a day and a half at mid-century, less as the roads improved in the 1870s.

²⁰ Aber and King, 612.

²¹ Aber and King, 614-615.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90

Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York

County and State

of his three sons died in the 1850s and his remaining son died of fever in the Civil War. After living alone for a few years, he left Lake Pleasant.²² The owners before the state acquired Moffitt's abandoned farm are unknown.

History of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was the first – and, perhaps, most universally successful and accepted – program of President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. In his July 2, 1932, acceptance speech at the Democratic Nominating Convention in Chicago, Roosevelt made the following promise to create meaningful public relief:

Let us use common sense and business sense. Just as one example, we know that a very hopeful and immediate means of relief, both for the unemployed and for agriculture, will come from a wide plan of the converting of many millions of acres of marginal and unused land into timberland through reforestation. There are tens of millions of acres east of the Mississippi River alone in abandoned farms, in cut-over land, now growing up in worthless brush. Why, every European Nation has a definite land policy, and has had one for generations. We have none. Having none, we face a future of soil erosion and timber famine. It is clear that economic foresight and immediate employment march hand in hand in the call for the reforestation of these vast areas.

In so doing, employment can be given to a million men. That is the kind of public work that is self-sustaining, and therefore capable of being financed by the issuance of bonds which are made secure by the fact that the growth of tremendous crops will provide adequate security for the investment.

Yes, I have a very definite program for providing employment by that means. I have done it, and I am doing it today in the State of New York.²³ I know that the Democratic Party can do it successfully in the Nation. That will put men to work, and that is an example of the action that we are going to have.²⁴

In 1933, almost 13 percent (12.8 million) of the total population of the United States (92.9 million) was unemployed, a figure representing 1 in 4 of the available labor force.²⁵ In 1933, the unemployment rate in New York State was 38.1 percent of the workforce – more than 2 million people and the seventh highest in the country. Adjoining states were in worse shape; Pennsylvania ranked second and New Jersey ranked fifth. In Pennsylvania, 40.2 percent (almost 1.5 million) of the workforce was unemployed; in New Jersey, the number was 38.8 percent (664,000).²⁶ Agricultural unemployment and underemployment were not counted in the

²² Aber and King, 50, 80, 133, 647.

²³ Roosevelt was referencing New York State's Temporary Emergency Relief Administration (TERA), acknowledged precursor to the CCC.

²⁴ Franklin D. Roosevelt, *Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago (July 2, 1932)*, The American Presidency Project #131.

²⁵ *United States History*, "Unemployment Statistics during the Great Depression."

²⁶ Committee on Economic Security, "Table 5: Estimates of Average Nonagricultural Employment and Unemployment, by States, 1930-33," *Social Security in America* (Washington, DC: Social Security Board, 1937).

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90

Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York

County and State

statistics. As a result, the rates only reflected urban unemployment; the rate in upstate New York in completely rural areas like Hamilton County was equally high or higher.²⁷

On March 9, 1933, five days after taking office, President Roosevelt ordered his staff to develop a plan to employ a half-million men in conservation projects by the summer. On March 21, he sent the plan (now limited to a quarter-million men) to Congress; it was approved and signed into law ten days later. The legislation gave Roosevelt broad authority to establish a program of “Emergency Conservation Work.”²⁸ The first enrollee was selected on April 7; the first camp opened April 17 in Luray, Virginia. In New York State, the first camps opened in Sloatsburg and Bear Mountain on May 18. The nineteenth camp, CCC Camp S-59 (Camp 11) – and first iteration of Camp Speculator – was established at Lake Pleasant on June 18.²⁹ On July 17, Roosevelt declared the corps the “vanguard of the American future.”

In speaking to you men of the Civilian Conservation Corps, I think of you as a visible token of encouragement to the whole country. You, nearly 300,000 strong, are evidence that the nation is still strong enough and broad enough to look after its own citizens.... Through you, the nation will graduate a fine group of strong young men, clean living, trained to self-discipline and above all, willing and proud to work for the job of working.³⁰

By late July, 301,230 men were on the national payroll of the Civilian Conservation Corps, and thirty-one camps had been opened in New York State.

This amazing accomplishment required the flexible cooperation of a diverse set of stakeholders – Roosevelt; his personal assistant, Louis Howe; Robert Fechner, first director of the CCC; cabinet heads of the Departments of Labor, War, Agriculture, and the Interior; the Forest Service; the US Army; state park and forest services; and organized labor. However, the successful launch of the CCC also depended on two key events that had taken place under the previous (Hoover) administration; these prepared the ground for the mission and operational framework of the CCC. The first was the 1932 authorization of a report on the condition of American forests and a strategy for their regeneration; the *Copeland Report* (prepared by US Forest Service Chief Robert Y. Stuart and released in early April, 1933) outlined projects that could employ up to 2 million men.³¹ The second was a contingency plan developed by the US Army to set up camps for transients in response to a Senate resolution in January, 1933 (prompted by the Bonus Army March on Washington the previous summer). The selection of Fechner, a union official, removed an incipient obstacle; he calmed union objections to the above-average wage of \$1 a day earned by CCC recruits.³²

Joseph Speakman has reviewed the first year of the CCC. He highlights the importance of the decision to recruit men who were not transient or homeless so that their wages would immediately go back into the economy:

²⁷ People in rural upstate New York were often better able to survive by living off the land (gardening, hunting, and cutting firewood) and sharing goods within families and communities. However, thirty-seven people in the Town of Lake Pleasant were working full-time on federal Civil Works Administration projects in 1934. Aber and King, 234.

²⁸ The CCC was legally known as the Emergency Conservation Work (ECW) program until 1937.

²⁹ Civilian Conservation Corps Legacy, “CCC Camps New York.”

³⁰ “Forest Corps Given Praise by Roosevelt,” *Schenectady Gazette*, July 17, 1933, 7.

³¹ Most people know that the “Dust Bowl” was an environmental crisis caused by mismanagement of agricultural land; few know that there was a similar crisis in American forestry caused by overcutting, fires, soil erosion, and epidemic forest pests and diseases.

³² Once the CCC was in full operation, Fechner also prevented union organizers from visiting the camps and issued a rule discharging any recruit who joined a union. He believed that the government was doing everything it should for CCC members, making unionization unnecessary. “Richard Fechner,” *Wikipedia*.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90

Hamilton Co, New York

Name of Property

County and State

Working closely with state relief agencies, the Labor Department would select single men between the ages of 18 and 25, primarily from families on the relief rolls. The men would receive \$30 a month, but they had to promise to send allotments of \$22–\$25 a month back home to family dependents. The Army would manage the work camps of 200 men each....

Once the state relief agencies selected eligible men, the Army, with its nine corps areas in the United States, would receive them at its various recruiting stations. If the recruits passed the physical (8.8 percent did not that first year), they would be enrolled as "Juniors," inoculated against smallpox and typhoid, and transported to various Army bases for a short period of "conditioning" involving calisthenics and light work duty.³³

African-Americans were fully eligible for the CCC, because the enabling legislation barred discrimination based on race, creed, or color. Not surprisingly, a number of southern states ignored this provision, until the federal government threatened to withhold funds for their programs. Racially-segregated camps were the result – in the north as well as the south. New York camps followed this pattern.³⁴

Working with recruits were Local Experienced Men (LEMs). Until the mid-1930s, most of the young men in the CCC came from urban areas and lacked any experience in forestry or agriculture. The organizers quickly realized that they needed technical staff to train the men in safe and efficient practices, and that these staff members should come from the local communities where the camps were located to forestall local objections (or worse). On April 22, Roosevelt issued an executive order to permit the CCC to hire such staff. To put this into perspective, in 1930 the Town of Lake Pleasant had a population of just 540 people; the hamlet, although the county seat for Hamilton County, was far smaller. Inserting a camp of 200 young, urban, unemployed men into a rural community with an unemployment rate at or above the national average required care. The LEMs became a critical element of the program and ensured local acceptance of the camps.

On May 11, 1933, enrollment was opened to a final group of unemployed men. Earlier that month, 3,000 World War I veterans marched on Washington in an attempt to revive demands for immediate payment of a service bonus. On May 16th, Louis Howe took Eleanor Roosevelt to visit their encampment. (This is the occasion of the famous quote, "Hoover sent the army, Roosevelt sent his wife.") There was little she could offer except the opportunity to enroll in the CCC. However, it was the best offer the veterans received. By June, 2,600 of the 1,933 Bonus Marchers had signed up, the first of a total enrollment of 225,000 veterans over the lifetime of the CCC.

Veterans were placed in separate camps, carefully kept away from the camps for juniors. The men were older – many in their mid-40s – often married, sometimes alcoholic, and frequently not as capable of hard physical labor. After CCC Camp S-59 closed in November 1933 (it had been a tent camp for young men and not meant for year-round use), it was replaced by CCC Camp S-90 (the set of buildings being nominated to the National Register.) In May, 1934, Camp Speculator received CCC Company 2206, composed of veterans previously working in Winooski, Vermont. They remained at Lake Pleasant until October 1935 when they were replaced by Junior Company 1208.³⁵

³³ Joseph M. Speakman, "Into the Woods: The First Year of the Civilian Conservation Corps," *Prologue Magazine* 38:3 (Fall 2006).

³⁴ Podskoch, 14. Twelve thousand Native Americans were also recruited into the CCC by an executive order dated April 14, 1933, but no separate Native-American camps seem to have been established in New York State.

³⁵ "Sacandaga Lake Campsite to Be Opened for Summer Season," *Amsterdam Daily Recorder*, March 31, 1936, 2.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90
Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York
County and State

Thus, the development of Civilian Conservation Corps Camp S-90 reflects the development of the larger CCC program. It was opened in the first 90 days of Roosevelt's administration, to fulfill his goal of employing 250,000 men in forestry and agricultural programs; it recruited men from the major urban centers of the East Coast who had little experience of rural life and taught them basic work skills; it served both young men and veterans; and it employed local people to train the recruits and ensure that they worked on meaningful projects. One such LEM, Clarence Petty, summarized his experience at two similar Adirondack camps:

...it turned out that this Federal Program was a great success. Not only did the boys learn to work, they learned pride in a job well done.... The CCC was a hurry up program. Roosevelt wanted these young boys off the street. Some 'enrollees were picked from city streets and dropped in our laps. But over time the situation improved and more competent workers showed up and those first recruits soon learned what needed to be done.³⁶

New York State's Civilian Conservation Corps Program

In the history of the CCC, New York had the largest program, with 208 camps enrolling 220,000 men.³⁷ At least four factors predisposed the state to embrace the corps. First, President Roosevelt had developed a prototype program while governor. His Temporary Emergency Relief Administration (TERA) was established in October, 1931, and provided work-relief through such "socially-useful" projects as highway construction, park development, reforestation, and water supply improvements.³⁸ At the end of 1932, tens of thousands of men were employed, with more than 25,000 engaged in TERA forestry projects.³⁹

Second, New York had well-developed policies for forestry and public parks. In his review of the CCC legacy, Craig Thompson notes:

Though many states did not have any state parks in 1933, New York already had a unified park program in place that was widely recognized as superior to any other state park system in the country. The state's Forest Preserve and reforestation area programs were likewise well established.⁴⁰

The New York Forest Preserve was created by legislation in 1885 and its protection for forest lands further upgraded at the 1894 state constitutional convention.⁴¹ However, by the early twentieth century, the land remained in poor condition due to clear-cutting, the fires of 1903 and 1905, and erosion – the reasons for the forest preserve in the first place. In 1911, the New York Conservation Department was assembled from the Forest Preserve Board, Water Supply Commission, Water Power Commission, and Forest, Fish, and Game Commission and given more authority to protect the environment and deal with the abandonment of marginal farmland. During Roosevelt's term as state governor, both the 1929 State Reforestation Act and 1931 Hewitt

³⁶ Podskoch, 6.

³⁷ Craig Thompson, "Force for Nature; 75 Years Later: the Legacy of the Civilian Conservation Corps," *New York State Conservationist* (March 2008), 33.

³⁸ Trudy Goldberg, "Temporary Emergency Relief Administration (TERA)," *National Jobs for All Coalition*.

³⁹ Neil M. Maher, *Nature's New Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 39.

⁴⁰ Thompson, *Ibid*.

⁴¹ Article 14 of the rewritten constitution is still known as the "forever wild" clause.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90

Hamilton Co, New York

Name of Property

County and State

Amendment (to the state constitution) were enacted, committing the state to buy damaged land, plant trees, and manage the resulting forests for commercial production. These lands could also be used for watershed protection and recreation.⁴² The New York State Park System was formally established in 1924 based on a plan developed in 1922 that called for a statewide system of parks linked by scenic parkways (*A State Park Plan for New York*, 1922; rev 1924). The \$15 million bond approved by citizens in 1924 passed by one of the largest margins in the state's history and enabled many of the parks to begin development. This meant that by the time the Depression brought park construction to a halt, the Conservation Department had partially developed plans, building designs, and park personnel ready to train laborers.

Third, these priorities were well understood by New York State's representatives at the federal level. The *Copeland Report* on US forests was named for Royal Samuel Copeland, senator from New York. Copeland called for the study in March, 1932. His enabling legislation asked the secretary of agriculture "to advise the Senate as soon as practicable whether, in his opinion, the Government should undertake to aid the States in the utilization for forestation purposes of those areas of land in the United States suitable for forestation only."⁴³

Most of the work done by CCC enrollees in New York State reflected the priorities listed in the *Copeland Report*:

- Protection against fire
- Protection against forest insects
- Protection against forest diseases
- Intensive forest management
- Reforestation of barren and unproductive land
- Watershed protection
- Program for forest recreation
- Forest wildlife program

Fourth, many of the 2 million unemployed people in New York were already on official unemployment rolls when the Civilian Conservation Corps was authorized in late March; thus, they were easy to recruit. However, not all who enlisted in the spring of 1933 were sent to New York State camps. Fast as camps opened in the state, there was not enough room for all the enrollees. After several weeks of physical conditioning (and mental preparation for semi-military life) at army bases like Fort Dix, NJ, many were put on trains for western camps in Idaho, Washington, Oregon, and California. Later in the year, enrollees from elsewhere were sent to New York as more camps opened and spaces became available. As a result, the first enlistment period was somewhat chaotic.

All CCC camps were run by the War Department; the New York camps (along with those in New Jersey and Delaware) fell under the jurisdiction of the Second Military Corps. In most cases, CCC work was done on public land but, in a few cases, CCC enrollees reforested private land. (Camp Speculator is unusual in being established on private land for the purpose of work on public land.) Of the total 208 camps, 115 (including Speculator) were run by the Conservation Department, 61 by the Department of the Interior (National Park Service), 21 by the Corps of Engineers and Soil Conservation Service, 5 by the army, and 6 by other agencies.

⁴² Maher (*Ibid.*) and New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, "State Forest History," *Strategic Plan for State Forest Management ... Adopted July 15, 2011*, 15-16.

⁴³ Charles F. Wilkinson and H. Michael Anderson, *Land and Resource Planning in the National Forests* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1987), 27.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90

Hamilton Co, New York

Name of Property

County and State

All parks and campgrounds in the Adirondacks were under the control of the New York State Conservation Department, so its camps conducted the widest range of projects.⁴⁴ As in the rest of the country, camps were segregated by age (juniors vs. veterans) and race. In New York, there were approximately 162 camps for (white) juniors, 20 camps for African-American juniors, 22 camps for (white) veterans, and 4 camps for African-American veterans.

The first camps in New York State opened on May 18, 1933 at Sloatsburg (SP-1) and Bear Mountain (SP-2); the last camp, North Pharsalia (S-80), closed on July 25, 1942. In that period, New York CCC enrollees:

- Constructed 393 miles of truck trails and built 73 truck trail bridges
- Planted 18,000 acres of trees
- Installed more than 450 miles of fencing to protect reforested areas
- Constructed 63 dams
- Built 107 fish-rearing ponds and restocked 346,000 fish
- Worked on 234 miles of stream development and bank protection
- Fought fires for 58,151 man-days
- Conducted forestry disease control on more than 1 million acres
- Conducted forestry pest removal on 3.7 million acres
- Built 80 water supply systems
- Installed more than 130,000 pipe and tile lines
- Searched for downed aircraft and missing hunters
- Constructed 2600 picnic tables
- Made 4000 signs⁴⁵

The CCC enrollees in New York State established much of the infrastructure at dozens (if not hundreds) of state parks, forests, and campgrounds.⁴⁶ But they did more for themselves as well. In addition to sending home wages that enabled many of their families to avoid or get off public relief, CCC members had access to an educational program that emphasized basic literacy training, vocational skills, and college correspondence courses. Often, this training helped them find full-time employment as drivers, heavy machinery operators, cooks, or foremen when they completed their enlistment. More importantly, enrollees received an education in “life.” Speaking in 1937, F.A. Silcox praised the CCC:

*The camps ... are a real and a very practical training school for raw labor in that they teach untrained youths how to work, efficiently and conscientiously, what a day's work is, and something of the dignity of labor. All this outside exercise in forest or field has its inevitable effect on their bodies, their minds, and their spirits, and one soon notices the growing and hardening muscles and the cheerful and smiling faces. Their pride and self-respect have been restored.*⁴⁷

⁴⁴ The numbering system given to the camps reflected their sponsoring agency. Most of the thirty camps in the Adirondacks were managed by the Conservation Department (now, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation) and designated S-[number]. A few camps worked on private land (P-[number]) and Army military reservations (A-[number]). Outside the Adirondacks, the Department of the Interior ran a large number of camps that focused on state parks (SP-[number]), some of which also dealt with wildlife and migrating waterfowl. Smaller numbers of projects were sponsored by the National Park Service, military, Corps of Engineering, and Soil Conservation Service, and focused on nationally-important historic sites, mosquito control, or drainage.

⁴⁵ Civilian Conservation Corps Legacy; Thompson, 34-35.

⁴⁶ Podskoch, 19-20.

⁴⁷ F.A. Silcox, “Our Adventure in Conservation: The CCC.” *Atlantic Monthly*, 160 (December 1937), 720.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90

Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York

County and State

Or, as Ralph Barton said of his time at Camp Speculator, “The CCCs was a good experience for me. I had work and learned how to get along with others.”⁴⁸

Civilian Conservation Camp S-59 (also known as Camp 11)

The first CCC camp in Lake Pleasant – S-59 – was established in mid-June, 1933, on state land near the present-day Moffitt Beach Campground.⁴⁹ Known briefly as Camp 11, the camp seems to have been laid out on both sides of Page Road. New York State owned the land and many people camped informally at the beach, but the Moffitt farm had not yet been formally developed by the Conservation Department as a campground.

In the following photo of Camp 11, the site is visibly closer to Lake Speculator than Camp 90, built the following year.



Figure 21. Camp 11 (Speculator), later known as CCC Camp S-59, Lake Pleasant, NY, 1933.

The men (all juniors) lived in tents until the camp closed in November and they were transferred to a winter camp south of Syracuse. The CCC enrollees developed paths, campsites, and camp amenities at Moffitt Beach and two other state campgrounds – Sacandaga (Wells) and Lewey Lake (Indian Lake.) Other projects included improvements to the Northville-Placid Trail (Benson to Piseco), reforestation, and stream improvement.⁵⁰ The juniors also destroyed 7,838 ribes (blister rust hosts) on 350 acres of the Forest Preserve and Sacandaga Lake Campsite (Moffitt Beach). This amount sounds small but involved teams of six to eight men walking five to six feet apart across rough terrain.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Podskoch, 250.

⁴⁹ The Civilian Conservation Corps Legacy website says Camp S-59 opened June 18, 1933; Podskoch (241) says June 12.

⁵⁰ State of New York Conservation Department, *Twenty-third Annual Report for the Year 1933* (Albany: J.B. Lyon Company, 1934), 40.

⁵¹ *Twenty-third Annual Report*, 109-116.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90

Hamilton Co, New York

Name of Property

County and State

About 200 young men lived at Camp S-59 with Local Experienced Men providing project supervision and training, while army officers maintained camp discipline. A *New York Sun* article extolled this arrangement:

The local contingents in the Adirondacks are made up of trained woodsmen. Their intimate knowledge of the forests is proving valuable. They work side by side with the other men – the youngsters from the streets of New York and other cities – and they are teaching them valuable lessons in woodcraft, a subject that has been entirely foreign to most of the boys.

The army officers in command of the camps have nothing whatsoever to do with the forestry work. That is under the direction of foremen employed by the State Conservation Department, which has a general superintendent in every camp. The army sees to it that the boys obey the foremen, do their work and maintain discipline in the camp.

On the whole, the young men encamped in this region of the Adirondacks seem to be a contented, happy lot, genuinely grateful for the opportunity to work in healthful surroundings. To nearly all of them, the camp life is a new and welcome adventure, an enjoyable vacation such as they never before experienced...

One camp has a graduate chemist, another a licensed pharmacist, one a second-year medical student and another an aviator of five years' experience. But they all found the going hard, and all were out of work when they joined up with the C.C.C.

For their six months' enlistment in this forestry army each man receives ample clothing, plenty of food, sunlight, fresh air, exercise, recreation, work, the best of medical attention when he needs it, dental care and other needs.⁵²

The *Sun* correspondent visited nine of the new CCC camps, including the one at Lake Pleasant (Camp 11). At Camp Speculator:

...the visitors had the chance of seeing the men just getting started in their camps – clearing the thick underbrush, erecting their tents and constructing the wood flooring for their quarters and building tent streets. The other camps visited were finished products, well-organized and the forestry work was progressing rapidly.⁵³

Joseph Frank Pugliese enlisted in the CCC in late 1933 and was sent to Camp S-59 at Lake Pleasant. He had been laid off from a manufacturing job in Dolgeville and signed up in Gloversville. Martin Podskoch interviewed him in 2006 when Pugliese was 94 years old. From his description, it is clear that key elements of the CCC program were already well-established:

There were Army barracks with 30 guys in each. They had a couple stoves that used coal. I was 21 years old.

⁵² "White Collar Men," *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90

Hamilton Co, New York

Name of Property

County and State

I built roads, cut down trees, built bridges, and shoveled snow. At first it was tough working in the snow. I never thought I'd make it, but after a couple of weeks I got used to it. It got really cold there. There was an old guy who taught us how to break rocks and build a bridge. I loved the work. You were hungry like a bear at the end of the day....

The food we got in the mess hall was good. In those days you were happy to have any kind of food. For lunch we had peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. We had a fire and toasted them. It was the best thing I ever tasted.

There was a canteen where they sold soft drinks, cigarettes, and coffee. They also had a small library at the camp and I read almost every book.⁵⁴

Pugliese remembered wearing uncomfortable Army uniforms (not yet ones designed for the CCC), being driven to Gloversville and Blue Mountain Lake for recreation, and playing cards and checkers with “the New York City boys” – who he eventually learned to beat at their games.

The camp closed November 11, 1933, as winter closed in, and the men were transferred. The record is unclear whether they went to Sherburne or North Pharsalia in Chenango County. (Two different sources report different destinations.)⁵⁵

Civilian Conservation Corps Camp S-90

The CCC program was welcome in Hamilton County; at its October, 1933, session, the county Grand Jury urged retention of all local camps.⁵⁶ The following May, Civilian Conservation Corps Camp S-90 opened in the Town of Lake Pleasant, still on Page Street, but closer to the hamlet on private land owned by Charles Letson. The site was only a mile further from Moffitt Beach Campground on less swampy ground with access to utilities.⁵⁷ The Conservation Department's *Annual Report for 1934* notes:

In the spring of 1934, the Speculator Camp was re-established [along with two other camps]. While all three of these camps have for their primary purpose the development of recreating facilities in the Forest Preserve, they have also engaged in other types of forest work including blister rust control, forest fire suppression, reduction of forest fire hazard, forest stand improvement, thinning in forest plantations, erection of forest fire observation towers and construction of wagon roads for fire suppression.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Podskoch, 247.

⁵⁵ On October 18, 1933, the *Gloversville & Johnstown Morning Herald* (“CCC Campers Will be Moved,” 14) reported the enrollees were to be sent to North Pharsalia; however, in March, 1936, the camp superintendent said that the camp had been transferred to Sherburne (“Sacandaga Lake Campsite to Be Opened”).

⁵⁶ “Jury for Hamilton Indicts in Shooting,” *Albany Evening News*, October 17, 1933, 10.

⁵⁷ It is tempting to conclude that these were the reasons for relocating the camp. Topographical maps show swampy land near the site of the previous camp that probably precluded expansion. Further, deeds for the nominated property describe an easement to the New York Power and Light Corporation, dated July 12, 1934.

⁵⁸ State of New York Conservation Department, *Twenty-fourth Annual Report for the Year 1934* (Albany: J.B. Lyon Company, 1935), 43.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90

Hamilton Co, New York

Name of Property

County and State

The actual work on the campsites consists of clearing, filling, building of roads and parking areas, construction of fireplaces, tables, bath houses, toilets, and floats and the safe-guarding of the surrounding woods from fires.⁵⁹

Somewhat later in the report, the camp's work is summarized as "Campsite development, dams, truck trails."⁶⁰ Two "side camps" of about 40 men each were established at the 34th Flow near the village of Blue Mountain Lake to build a dam on the Rock River; this dam created a pond of 400 acres (now part of the Lake Durant Campground). Another side camp held CCC enrollees working at the Caroga Lake Campground.⁶¹

The initial contingent consisted of 200 veterans enrolled in Company 2206, who began arriving from the Winooski valley of Vermont around May 11, 1934. They remained through October 25, 1935, when they were replaced by Company 1208 of juniors. The junior company remained until the camp closed permanently on November 1, 1941.⁶²

Camp Architecture

The following photo shows the general layout of the new Camp Speculator; Page Street runs through the middle of the image from the hamlet of Lake Pleasant toward Lake Speculator; Route 8 runs across the bottom; and the community baseball diamond is at center bottom. Initially, as in 1933, the enrollees were in tents.



Figure 22. Aerial Photograph, Camp Speculator, 1934. New York State Archives Digital Collection.

The footprint for Camp S-90 reflected the functional divisions of the CCC – it was run by the Army, provided educational and medical services, housed 200 enrollees, fed them, cleaned them, drove them to work (and

⁵⁹ *Twenty-fourth Annual Report*, 152.

⁶⁰ *Twenty-fourth Annual Report*, 154.

⁶¹ "Sacandaga Lake Campsite to Be Opened."

⁶² "US Orders CCC in Speculator to Cease Work," *Gloversville & Johnstown Morning Herald*, November 1, 1941, 14.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90

Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York

County and State

picked up supplies), and provided recreational opportunities.⁶³ As a result, the camp needed an administration building; separate quarters for the supervising military officers, education officer, forestry workers, and junior staff; educational facilities; clinic; barracks; mess hall and kitchen; showers; latrine; garages; and recreation areas. (Some Local Experienced Men seem to have lived at home and commuted to the camp and its projects.)

In April, 1934, the Town of Lake Pleasant upgraded Page Street with a gravel base and crushed stone surface at a cost of \$1,500.⁶⁴ Along with the July deed easement to New York Power and Light Corporation, this work was probably a precursor to construction of the permanent camp. The work was done by local people. In 1936, Scott Conroy, then superintendent of Camp S-90, noted that:

*The work done by the CCC in this area has been of considerable economic value to this community in that it furnished work to local labor while the camp was being built, and many have had the opportunity to join the CCC as local experienced men.*⁶⁵

There are no photographs of Camp Speculator under construction, but photos from Barnum Pond (also known as Paul Smiths, Camp S-60) show the erection of similar buildings.

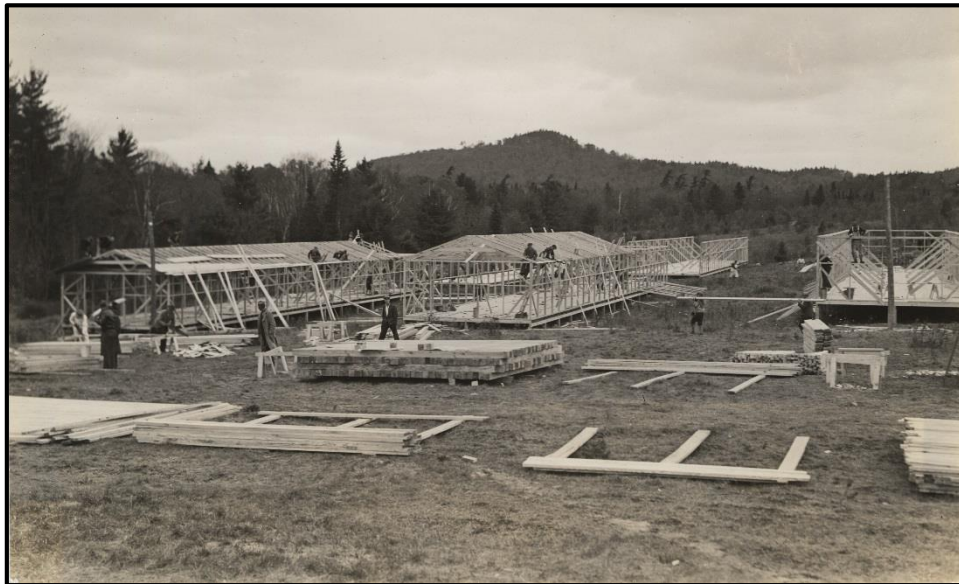


Figure 23. Construction of Barracks at Barnum Pond (Paul Smiths, Camp S-60), circa 1934. New York State Archives Digital Collection.

The similarity of the finished buildings at Camp Speculator and Barnum Pond makes it clear that New York State's northern forest camps were developed from a common set of blueprints. The plans for all CCC buildings were based by military district, and plans for all the buildings found at Camp Speculator (except the Education

⁶³ According to an email from Marty Podskoch, the men washed their own clothes.

⁶⁴ Podskoch, 242.

⁶⁵ "Sacandaga Lake Campsite to Be Opened." Conroy also noted that the improvements to local campsites and streams also benefited the community by bringing in more trade for merchants, hotels, and guides.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90

Hamilton Co, New York
 County and State

Name of Property

Building) are available from the National Archives.⁶⁶ They are dated from the spring of 1935, but appear identical to the Camp Speculator buildings with a few exceptions, the most notable being the use of a stove (rather than a fireplace) in the Recreation Building. [NOTE: See Section 11 for copies of the plans.]

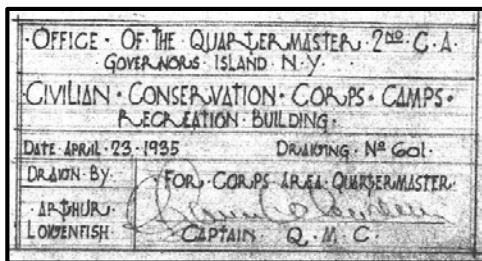


Figure 24. Identifying information from plans prepared by the Office of the Quartermaster, 2nd C.A., for CCC buildings. National Archives.

The plans show the common elements of CCC design – board and batten siding, foundation piers, metal roofs, square awning windows, and closely spaced roof trusses. The barracks buildings at both Barnum Pond and Camp Speculator are identical to the plans – long, serviceable oblongs with board and batten siding, piers, metal roofs, small windows under unfinished eaves, and entry doors on the ends.

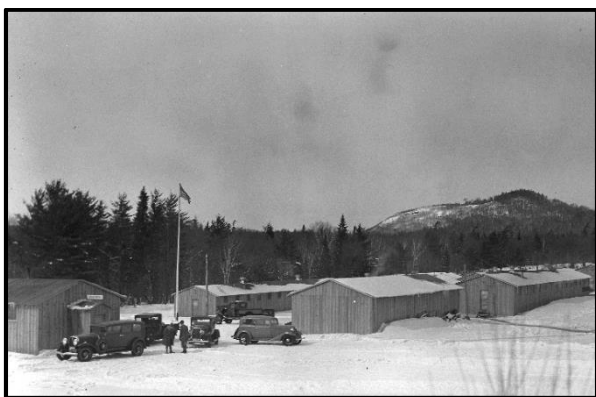


Figure 25: Barnum Pond Barracks, late 1930s. New York State Archives Digital Collection.



Figure 26: Camp Speculator Barracks, late 1930s. Adirondack Museum.

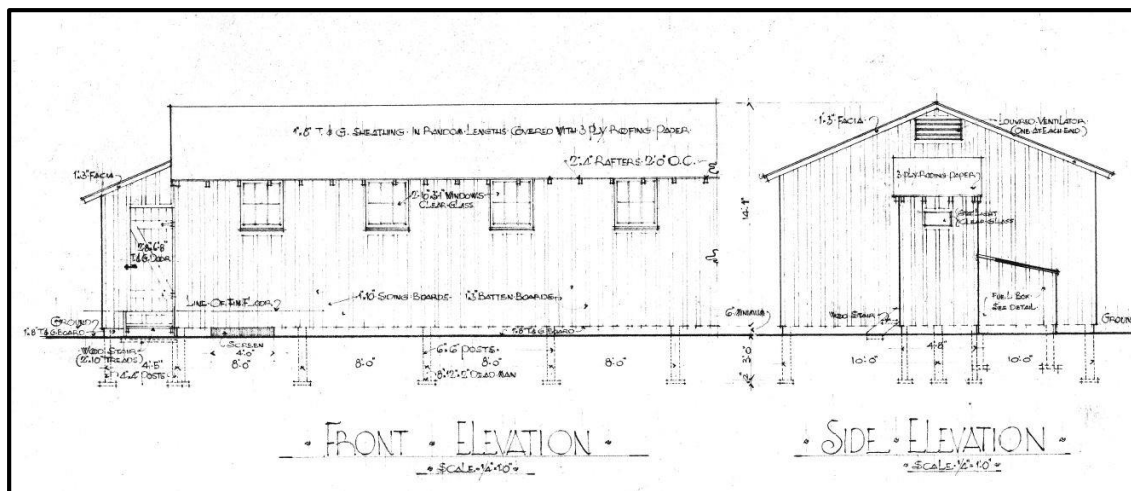


Figure 27. Detail from Office of the Quartermaster, 2nd C. A., *Civilian Conservation Corps Camps: Dormitory* [Drawing 602] (Jan. 21, 1935). National Archives.

⁶⁶ Office of the Quartermaster, 2nd C.A., *Civilian Conservation Corps Camps Plans*, 1935, from National Archives, *Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps: Administrative History – Arch/engr Plans* [Record Group 35.1].

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90

Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York

County and State

Interior photos show identical roof trusses in both barracks (though the government-issue stoves seem slightly different):⁶⁷



Figure 28: Interior, Barnum Pond Barracks, late 1930s. New York State Archives Digital Collection.

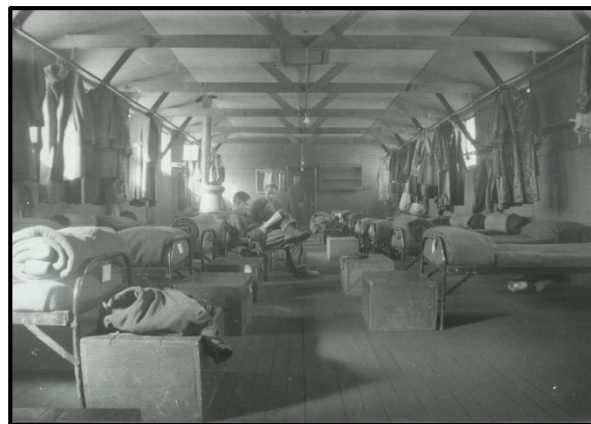


Figure 29: Interior, Camp Speculator Barracks, late 1930s. Adirondack Museum.

Another Quartermaster's Plan gives a cross-section of the framing used in the dormitory (and other) buildings:

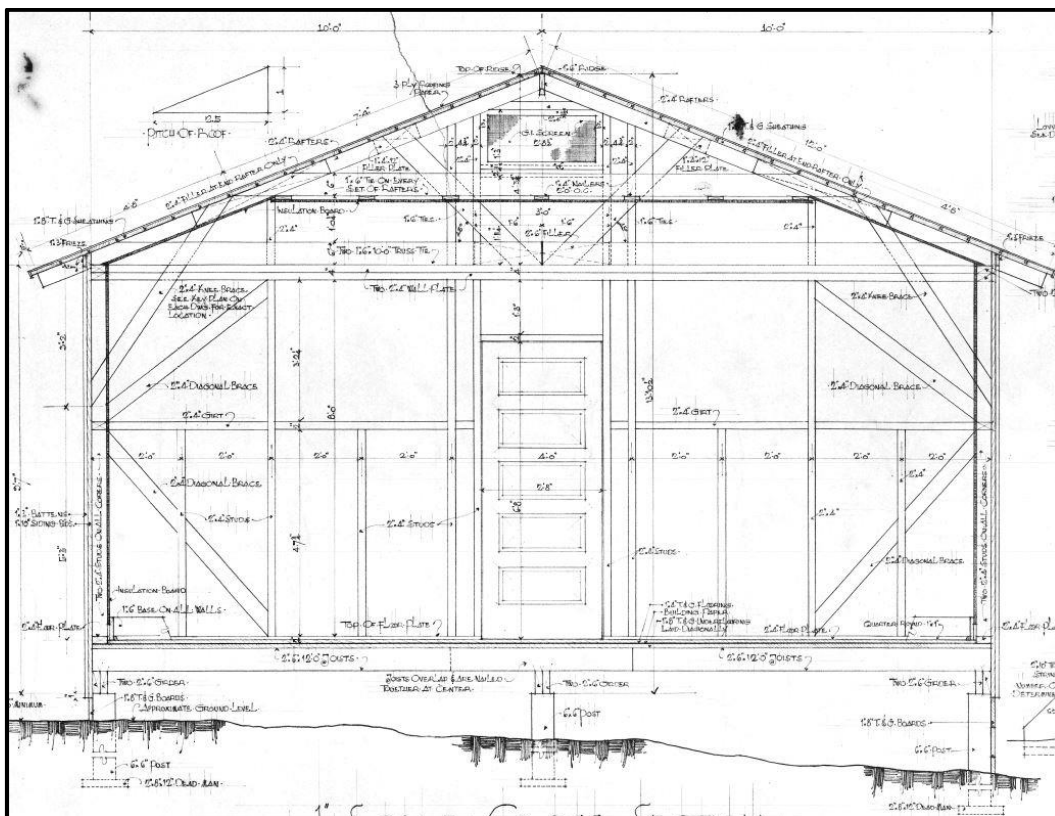


Figure 30. Detail from Office of the Quartermaster, 2nd C. A., *Civilian Conservation Corps Camps: Sections & Framing Details* [Drawing 628] (May 13, 1935). National Archives.

⁶⁷ As proof of the differences between military districts, photos of a contemporary CCC Camp in Tennessee have many similarities but lack interior walls and insulation. Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, TN.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90
Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York
County and State

Plans for the other three building types are nearly identical with the surviving buildings:



Figure 31. Recreation Hall, 2016. Photo from Jim Tavares.

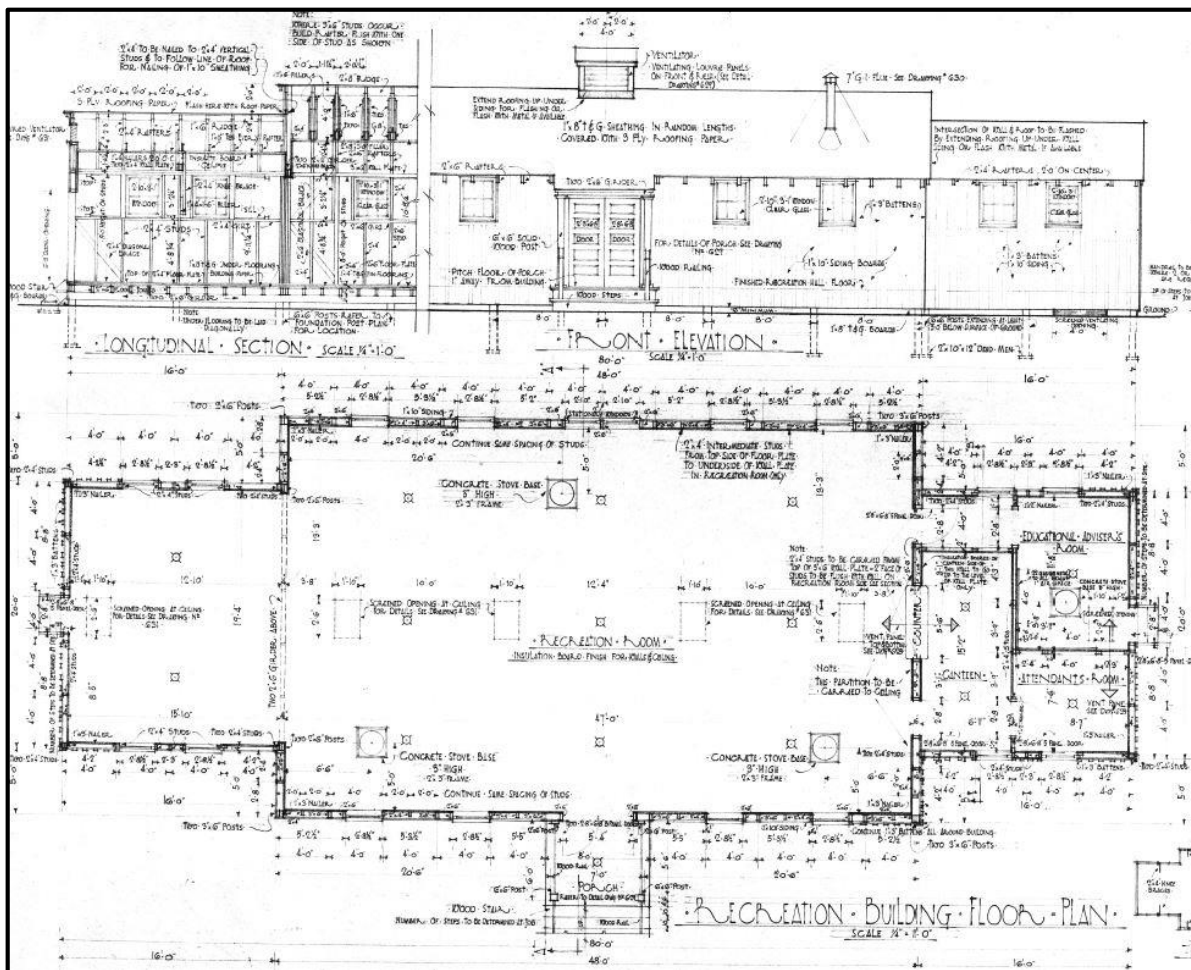


Figure 32. Detail from Office of the Quartermaster, 2nd C. A., *Civilian Conservation Corps Camps: Recreation Building* [Drawing 601] (April 23, 1935). National Archives.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90
Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York
County and State



Figure 33. Lavatory/Latrine Building, 2016.

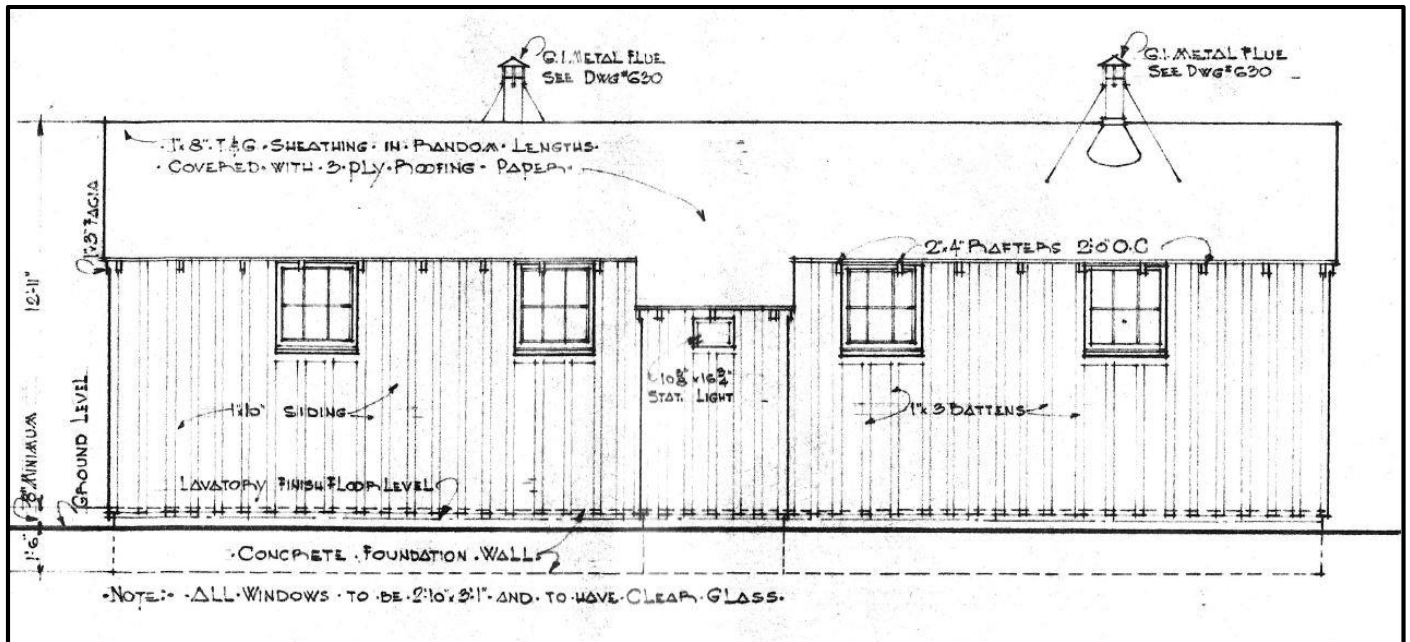


Figure 34. Detail from Office of the Quartermaster, 2nd C. A., *Civilian Conservation Corps Camps: Lavatory-Latrine (Sewage System)* [Drawing 610-A] (May, 1935). National Archives.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90
Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York
County and State



Figure 35. Girl's Bath House (Forestry Quarters), 2016.

NOTE: Only the right side of this building (which contained the plumbing) remains from the Forestry Quarters.

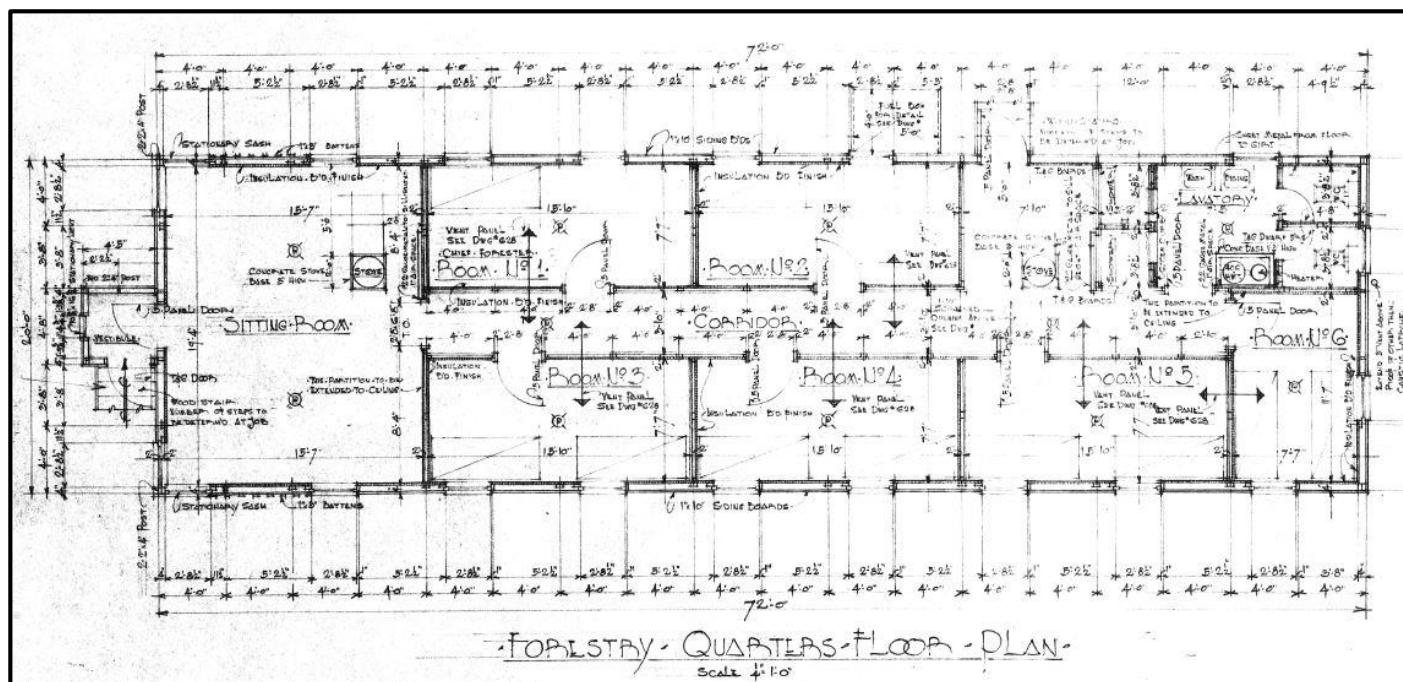
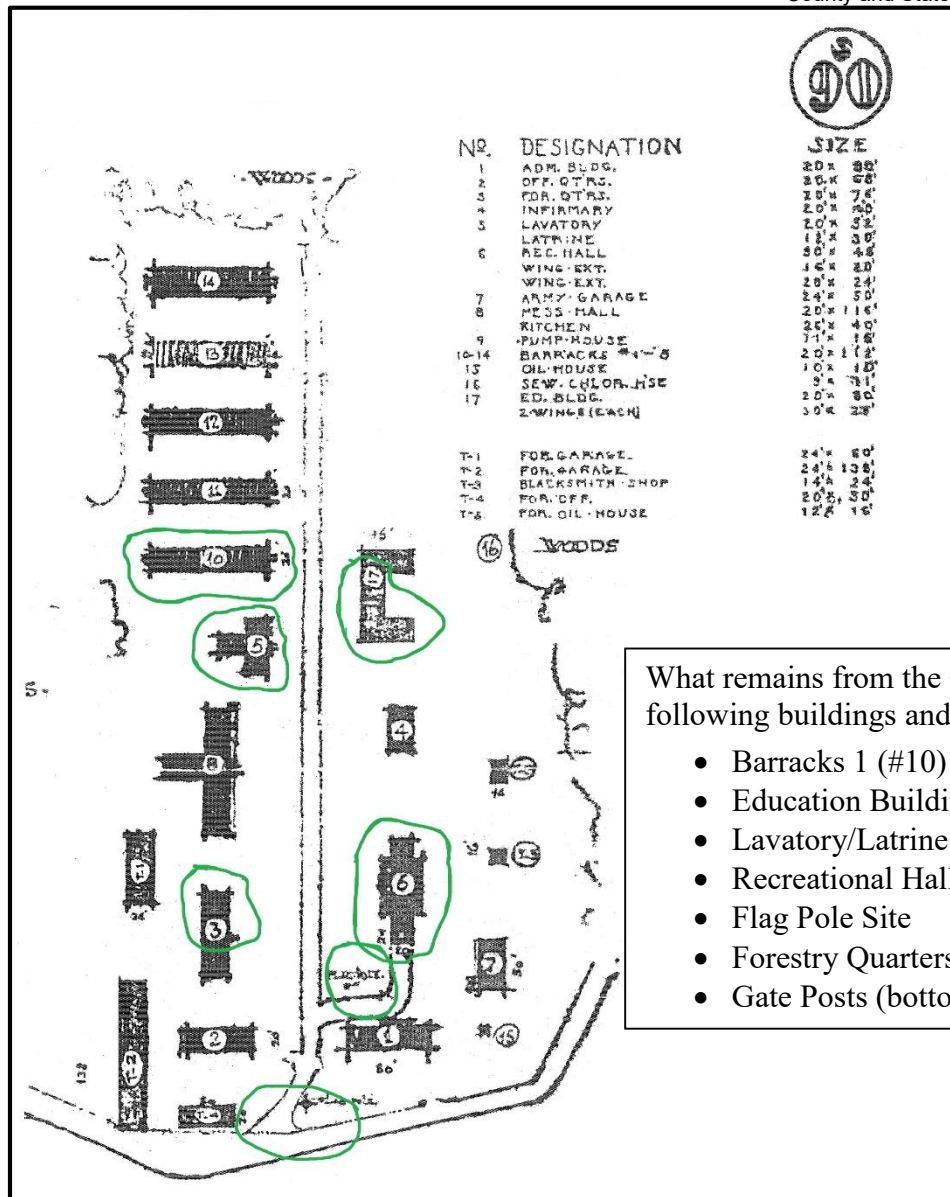


Figure 36. Detail from Office of the Quartermaster, 2nd C. A., *Civilian Conservation Corps Camps: Forestry Quarters* [Drawing 608] (April, 15, 1935). National Archives.

All told, when Camp Speculator was complete, it included a variety of buildings. The largest were the administration building, officers' quarters, forestry quarters, recreation hall, mess hall and kitchen, five barracks, and education building. However, there were also many service buildings: garages, a blacksmith shop (for tools), infirmary, lavatory (with attached latrine), pump house, oil house, and chorine storage. The National Archives contains plans for many of these lost structures, all of which used the common CCC design features. (See Section 11 for plans for most of these CCC building types.)

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90
 Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York
 County and State



What remains from the CCC era are the following buildings and sites:

- Barracks 1 (#10)
- Education Building (#17)
- Lavatory/Latrine (#5)
- Recreational Hall (#6)
- Flag Pole Site
- Forestry Quarters (#3)
- Gate Posts (bottom)

Figure 37: Site Plan of CCC Camp S-90 with building list (details of utility lines removed). Adirondack Museum.

After 1939, CCC camps like Speculator were no longer being built the same way. Instead of fabricating buildings on site, prefabricated units were delivered to the camp and assembled. Captain William A. Toth of the Field Artillery Reserve described the process used to complete a CCC camp in Rensselaer County in a single month:

The buildings come in sections, ... and are the last word in modern construction. Side sections are complete even to the inside wallboard and screen windows. The sections are fitted together with nuts and bolts. Average length of the barracks will be 120 feet.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ "CCC Camp Grows Near Battlefield at Bemis Heights," *Troy Times*, August 31, 1939, 12.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90

Name of Property

Life in Camp Speculator

Hamilton Co, New York

County and State

In 1938, a Detroit photographic company visited Camp Speculator to take photos. Spencer & Wyckoff seems to have specialized in government contracts; its portfolio includes images of military encampments, national parks, and dams throughout the US, as well as other CCC camps in Michigan, Arizona, and Tennessee. The resulting commemorative print combines images of the personnel, canteen, infirmary, mess hall, barracks, and overall layout of the camp, with the names of the two military commanders, educational officer, project superintendent, assistant superintendent, local experienced men, and all the enrollees.



Figure 38: Spencer and Wyckoff, “1208th Company CCC, Camp S-90. Speculator, New York,” [Commemorative Print], 1938. Adirondack Museum. See Section 11 for the individual images.

After the first year of the CCC, more of the men came from upstate New York – Gloversville, Schenectady, Troy, Amsterdam, and many small northern communities, including Lake Pleasant itself. Work was capped at forty hours a week, leaving time for personal activities. The canteen provided “goodies” and cigarettes; trucks took the men to the movies in Gloversville on the weekend. During the summers, some of the CCC men met people at the campgrounds where they were working; one, Bob Beirlein, married a young woman he met at Moffitt Beach Campground.⁶⁹ Others got to know individuals in the community and ended up staying in the area for the rest of their lives.

Alvin (Al) Mayers came to Camp S-90 from Philadelphia, played a lot of ball in the community, and married the daughter of one of the foremen at the camp. His son, Dick, talked about his father’s life in the CCC:

⁶⁹ Podskoch, 254.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90

Hamilton Co, New York

Name of Property

County and State

Dad worked as a supply clerk in the camp. He also was the cartoonist for the camp newspaper, "Months and Days."

On the weekends he played baseball with the Speculator town team.⁷⁰ The local teams were happy to recruit the athletic CCC boys. In the winter he went out on the lake on snowshoes and also went tobogganing on the hill behind the movie theater. There was a toboggan slide by Jack Leadly's land...

Dad also went to the local dances where the guys met local girls and eventually some of them married and settled in the area. My father was one of those guys.⁷¹

Sports were very important. In addition to town games, there were CCC Field Days in larger towns like Tupper Lake. More than a thousand people might attend to watch teams from the various camps play against one another. In addition, the men liked to tease each other, flipping over the cots of neighboring barracks or giving late arrivals a shower of cold water when they came to bed after hours.⁷²

Some men took advantage of academic and vocational training at the camp. CCC Education Officers were often well-trained and well-prepared for the job. For instance, in 1938, A. Thomas Marro transferred to Camp Speculator from the CCC camp at Mannsville. Marro was a graduate of the Trenton State Teachers College at Rutgers University (B.S.) and Columbia University (M.A), and had started a PhD at New York University; after a few months, he took the New York Civil Service exam for a senior supervisor position and passed.⁷³ Students like Elwood Garrison upgraded their education while in Lake Pleasant. Garrison took English courses in the evenings, trained in first aid, and received instruction in pest control. When he left Camp Speculator, his work experience paid off – he started a job at the Bigelow-Sanford Company for twice his CCC pay.⁷⁴ Other men, like Kenneth J. Saunders of Gloversville and Daniel Sessions of South Carolina, left the CCC before they finished their enlistments to enroll in the regular army; this became more common as the military began to prepare for the possibility of war.⁷⁵

Not everything was fun and games. Many of the enrollees remember the camp as disciplined but not unnecessary so, while some found it very constraining. The work was often hard. Much of the campground construction was done with hand tools, and the men broke rocks with hammers to build foundations and campfire rings. One year, a group built a bridge at the Sacandaga campground almost entirely by hand, spending hours in the water building the supports for the bridge. This event was captured in photos, but also by the camp artist, Hans Held, who was assigned to the camp around 1937.⁷⁶ He painted a 6' by 30' mural for the

⁷⁰ The town baseball diamond on Route 8 touched the southwest corner of the camp.

⁷¹ Podskoch, 249-250. Ambernette Page died and Al Mayers remarried; his son was a child of the second marriage.

⁷² Podskoch, 250.

⁷³ "Mannsville CCC Official Transferred to Speculator," *Gloversville & Johnstown Leader Republican*, November 11, 1938, 5; "Speculator Man Passes Exams," *Gloversville & Johnstown Leader Republican*, February 16, 1939, 24.

⁷⁴ Podskoch, 248.

⁷⁵ "Two Enlistments at Local Army Recruiting Station," *Amsterdam Evening Recorder*, September 28, 1937, 1; "South Carolina Man is Latest Army Recruit Here," *Amsterdam Daily Democrat and Recorder*, August 28, 1938, 12.

⁷⁶ After seeing the mural at Camp Speculator, Kathleen Duxbury began to hunt out and research other CCC artists who were part of an official CCC Art Program personally authorized by Roosevelt in 1934. The program was administered by the Treasury Department and assigned artists to various camps to document their activities. She discovered that Hans Held was an immigrant from Germany who had trained in mural painting in New York City. He apparently painted a second mural for Camp Speculator that hung over the fireplace. After the program ended in 1937, he seems to have moved to California where he died. Her first book covers Marshall

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90

Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York

County and State

recreation building that hung in the camp until 1989. (A replica remains after the Adirondack Museum acquired the original.) It depicts CCC men building a suspension bridge (artistic license, as can be seen below.)



Figure 39. CCC men from Camp Speculator building the bridge at Speculator Campground, late 1930s. Adirondack Museum.



Figure 40. Bridge at Speculator Campground built by CCC Camp Speculator, late 1930s. Adirondack Museum.



Figure 41. Mural from the Recreation Building at CCC Camp Speculator, circa 1937. Adirondack Museum.

Medical care was provided by a contract surgeon (in 1938, Dr. Jules B. Van Urk) and, as might be expected from the kind of work done by the CCC enrollees, the men suffered a variety of accidents. But they also received preventive care and dental work, some for the first time in their lives.

One tragedy is of note. On July 21, 1934, five men from Camp Speculator drowned in Round Pond (near the upper end of the Sacandaga Reservoir) while helping to fight a fire; three were saved. Four of the men who died were World War I veterans enrolled at the camp; the fifth was one of the local experienced men, a supervising woodsman.⁷⁷ The death of the veterans may have been the pretext for changing the camp to serve junior enrollees the following year.⁷⁸

Davis who, after serving in Mississippi, documented many camps. See Kathleen Duxbury, *CCC Art: Artists of the Civilian Conservation Corps – Marshall Davis* (Ridgewood, NJ: Duxbury Media, 2014) for more information on the CCC Art Program.

⁷⁷ "Five Drown in Saratoga Pond," *Troy Times*, July 21, 1934, 1.

⁷⁸ Later that year in October, the Army commandant at the camp, Captain George T. Summerlin, also died. He (and another passenger) were killed while Summerlin was on his way to visit his family in New York City. "Speculator CCC Comander [sic] and Friend Killed in Auto Crash, Four Others Injured," *Gloversville & Johnstown Morning Herald*, October 20, 1934, 14.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90
Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York
County and State

By the mid-1930s, Camp Speculator (and the CCC program) was at its zenith. Enrollments were high; the camp was well-established with a corps of enrollees re-enlisting each six months; men at the camp saw its benefits in terms of immediate employment after discharge; and families had been kept off the relief rolls by the \$25 sent home each month. There was a camp newspaper – *Months and Days in 1208 [CCC unit]* – and many opportunities for recreation, education, and medical care. The camp had generally good relations with the community. Enrollees spent money at the store and hotel, played ball with the town team, and exchanged labor for rides on the toboggan slide that Lake Pleasant had developed in the early 1930s to bring visitors to the area for winter recreation.

But, the improving national economy soon changed the character of the Civilian Conservation Corps, and increasing preparations for national defense sealed its fate. Camps began to close as they finished their projects (especially at state parks and campgrounds). The men who enrolled were rougher, and camp services grew worse. Philip Cohen joined the CCC in Brooklyn on January 3, 1941. His description of his time at Camp Speculator is notably more negative than those of earlier attendees. Water pipes froze because the night watchman was not doing his job; the food was bad; the locals were hostile; and he felt he needed to keep to himself.

The group I went to camp with was from NYC and half were from the local area like Gloversville & Johnstown. You couldn't get too friendly because most of the guys were of questionable character. We started with 200 and wound up with 90 in June.⁷⁹

A fire on May 24 destroyed Barracks #4. It may have occurred by accident – there were fewer enrollees and, perhaps, less attention to the stoves. However, three subsequent fires were set on July 7, 15, and 18 (the first day of command by a new military officer). Luckily, bucket brigades of camp men soon put the fires out. Two weeks later, three enrollees from Brooklyn, Astoria, and Malone were arrested and given suspended sentences for damage to property after they confessed to the July arsons.⁸⁰

Camp Speculator closed on November 1, 1941.⁸¹ A few days before, President Roosevelt had asked for consolidation of the remaining CCC camps so that War Department personnel could be released from supervision. A month and a half later, the country was at war. The following June 30, the Congress voted to end the CCC and liquidate its assets.

John Salmond believes the CCC was an ideal program for its time – 1933, the height of the Depression – but one superseded by economic recovery and war.

...it is difficult to see, given the labor situation in 1942, how in fact the Corps could have been continued. The agency was dependent for the bulk of its enrollees on the unskilled unemployed. In the full employment situation of the war, its source of supply no longer existed. It is true, too, that by 1942 the CCC as an organizational amalgam of federal departments was falling apart. Racked by internal dissention and

⁷⁹ Podskoch, 259.

⁸⁰ "Three Enrollees of CCC Camp Plead Guilty to Damaging Property," *Gloversville & Johnstown Leader-Republican*, July 30, 1941, 3. The three men denied setting the original fire.

⁸¹ "US Orders CCC in Speculator to Cease Work," *Gloversville & Johnstown Morning Herald*, November 1, 1941, 14.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90

Hamilton Co, New York

Name of Property

County and State

apathy, its continuance as an effective agency would have been contingent on radical changes in organization, scarcely practical in the war situation....

Intimately connected with the Corps' failure to outgrow its temporary status was its inability to shake off the relief stamp. The CCC was never able to convince the Congress or the public that it had other functions besides the provision of relief and the performance of useful work.... Most continued to consider the CCC as having primarily a relief function, and consequently, when rising re-employment rates made this irrelevant, the agency was bound to be stopped.⁸²

4-H Camp Sacandaga – Acquisition

When Congress voted to close the CCC, it approved \$8 million to liquidate the assets of the program. In other areas of the country, CCC camps were used in the war effort, but Camp Speculator was too remote. Some of the tools and vehicles associated with the camp were undoubtedly salvaged and reused, but the CCC buildings at Lake Pleasant remained closed for the balance of World War II.⁸³ Many former enlistees volunteered for service and fought for their country. Several, including Private Leslie I Ackerman of Amsterdam, were captured or killed.⁸⁴

Before the war ended, the army offered the buildings to the Tri-county Council of the 4-H for use as a camp; this council included clubs in Fulton, Montgomery, and Herkimer Counties. With the exception of Barracks #4, all of the CCC buildings apparently remained, having been looked after by a caretaker for three years.

The 4-H was a natural choice for disposing of the CCC camp.⁸⁵ The U.S. Department of Agriculture had begun to focus on preserving rural life with the formation of land grant universities under the Morrill Act of 1862; in the late nineteenth century, educators associated with New York State's land grant College of Agriculture at Cornell University began to independently develop programs and clubs for rural youth; and New York quickly implemented the federal Smith-Lever Act of 1914, creating a network of County Extension agents throughout the state. Under the extension system, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, New York State Department of Education, Cornell, and county governments cooperated in developing programs for agricultural education. New York became the second state to adopt the 4-H program, and its Cooperative Extension agents soon created a network of county-based 4-H clubs. In 1930, the Education Department withdrew its support. As a result, the 4-H program remains associated with the Cornell Cooperative Extension today.

The 4-H mission was to provide informal out-of-school recreation for the children of farming families to help them gain practical skills and become productive members of society. The club motto ("Learn by Doing") and cloverleaf emblem ("Head, Hands, Heart, and Health") embody the holistic approach used by 4-H educators. The earliest clubs were described as "corn clubs and cooking clubs" and focused on specific agricultural projects, many involving raising animals and other aspects of farm life. Many clubs, for instance, undertook gardening projects during the First World War.

⁸² John A. Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1967), 218-219.

⁸³ In 1945, the *Amsterdam Evening Recorder* reported that the site had been used as a prisoner of war camp, but the county and town historians dismiss this claim.

⁸⁴ "Amsterdam Soldier Reported Missing in Action Somewhere in Area of Northwest Africa," *Amsterdam Evening Recorder*, February 20, 1943, 3.

⁸⁵ Most of the following information on the history of the New York State 4-H comes from Clara Stewart's "A Brief History of 4-H Development" (2000), on the state 4-H website.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90

Hamilton Co, New York

Name of Property

County and State

Camping became a strong element of the New York State 4-H program after 1924, when a one-week tent camp (for girls) was run on Long Island and a two-week tent camp (boys one week, girls the next) was run in Chenango County. As assistant agent Dorothy Powell reported, great benefit was seen in bringing rural children together:

It is quite as important that we teach club girls happy, healthful recreation as practical work. In learning to swim, hike, play and work together at camp, these 65 girls learned more in perseverance, self-reliance, cooperation and self-discipline than in any other phase of the work.⁸⁶

Other camps followed – seven counties had programs in 1928, and thirteen camps existed in 1936 (often sponsored by more than one county). Crafts, campfires, swimming, life-saving, conservation, woodcraft, and many other activities soon became fundamentals of 4-H Camp fun. Initially, camps moved around a bit, many being located in state parks. However, after the war, eight county camp councils acquired their own sites. One of these was the Tri-County Council's Camp Sacandaga.

On February 12, 1945, at the Army Depot in Scotia, N.Y., the army completed the transfer of the Lake Pleasant CCC buildings. A newspaper article announcing the gift gave some information on the condition of the site and 4-H plans:

There are about 20 buildings with some equipment. If conditions permit, the camping program will be started during the coming season. The opportunity to acquire use of the site for camping came to the three 4-H organizations through an offer made some time ago by Army officials. Several CCC camps have been turned over to these organizations in the state, as it has been the policy of the Army, when it has no further use for them, to dispose of the buildings in this manner.⁸⁷

Not all of the buildings were appropriate for the type of camp that the 4-H planned to run, so the council held an auction on Saturday, May 12, 1945, and "sold a number of the buildings which the club couldn't use." This sale appears to be the point at which the most of the service buildings (and perhaps the mess hall and some of the barracks) were lost from the site.⁸⁸ In total, the auction raised \$2,200.⁸⁹

Ten weeks later, the 4-H camp opened for a three-week season. The newspaper announced that:

A fine program of sports, entertaining and inspiring programs, campfire meetings, special courses in handicraft, conservation, nature study, etc., have been planned.⁹⁰

Swimming took place at Moffitt Beach. (At some point during the life of the camp, an area of the beach was reserved for the 4-Hers with a special trail through the campground.)

The new camp was supported by many local groups. In September, the Montgomery County Home Bureau took a trip to Lake Pleasant to see the camp and fall foliage; attendees brought covered dishes to heat and share:

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* Powell was describing the Long Island camp.

⁸⁷ "CCC Buildings are Given to 4-H," *Gloversville & Johnstown Morning Herald*, February 14, 1945, 3.

⁸⁸ The aerial view from 1953 shows only Barracks #1 in place and only a few remaining service buildings on the south side of the camp.

⁸⁹ "Committee Will Direct 4-H Club," *Gloversville & Johnstown Morning Herald*, May 19, 1945, 10.

⁹⁰ "4-H Club Camp Opens July 29 at Speculator," *Gloversville & Johnstown Morning Herald*, July 25, 1945, 3.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90

Hamilton Co, New York

Name of Property

County and State

This promises to be a most interesting excursion. The trees should be showing the latest in Fall colors and covering the mountains with all the rich tones of Autumn.

The 4-H camp is one of the best in this [unreadable]. It was originally a Civilian Conservation Corps camp and then, during the war it was used for prisoners of war. [Not true.] Now, after a great deal of hard work, it affords the boys and girls in this section an ideal place for camping. There are girls' and boys' dormitories, both furnished with running water and showers. The dining hall is a bright place with its natural pine paneling and its white curtains with the 4-H clover design. The large kitchen is very well equipped and is a handy place to work.

The recreation hall is the place where everyone gathers for stunts and a good time. The huge fireplace with a great fire roaring in it is a cheerful sight on a cool day. There is also an infirmary with the nurse's quarters. The caretaker has his home on the grounds and is present all year.⁹¹

From this description, it appears that the functions of the kitchen and dining hall had already been moved into the old Education Building. (A photo shows the Mess Hall and Kitchen gone by 1953.)⁹² The boys' dormitories appear to have been located in Barracks #1 (subdivided into 4 sections to accommodate different age groups). The girl's dormitories appear to have been located in both the Officer's Quarters and Forestry Quarters (Buildings #2 and 3). Postcards from the early period of the camp show parts of the site:



Figure 42: View of camp from Recreation Hall, before 1968. North side of Boys' Bath Room on left; Dining Hall (former CCC Education Building) on right.

⁹¹ "County Home Bureau Unit to Visit Speculator 4-H Camp Thursday, Sept. 30," *Amsterdam Evening Recorder*, September 21, 1945, 10.

⁹² The girls' dorms were replaced by new cabins built in the 1970s; their location before that time is suggested by the 1953 aerial view and camp history from former 4-H Camp Director, Jim Tavares.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90
Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York
County and State

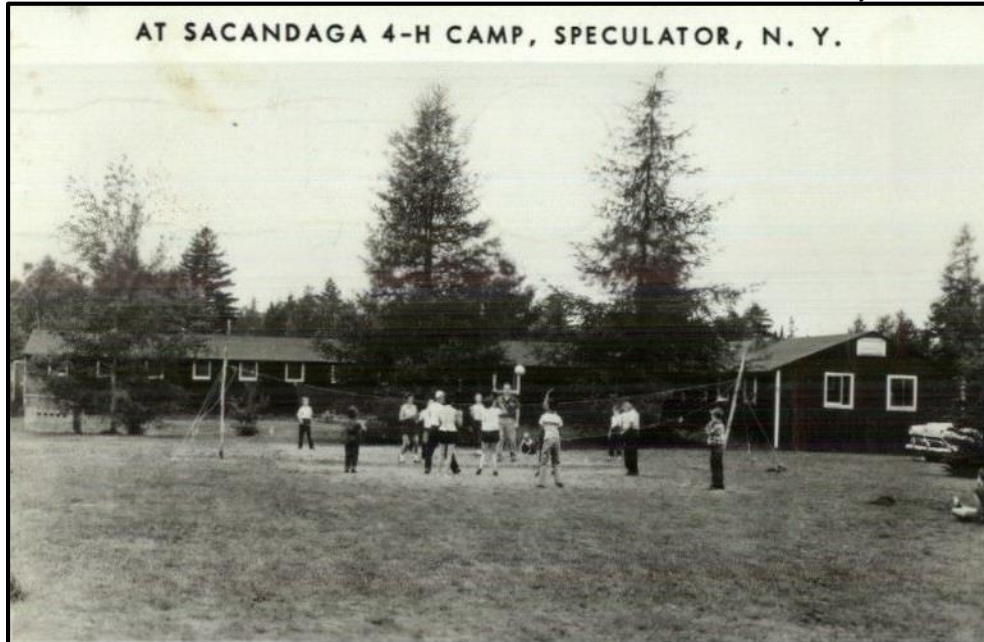


Figure 43: View of Boys' Bath Room (CCC Lavatory/ Latrine) at right and rear of Cabins 9-10 (CCC Barracks #1) at left, before 1968.

The CCC camp buildings were essential to the mission of the 4-H camp, but the Tri-County 4-H Council did not own the underlying land. This became an increasingly important issue as Camp Sacandaga developed – or did not develop – over the next twenty-five years.

Land Ownership

As noted, there were several owners of Totten and Crossfield, Township 2, Lot 7, in the early nineteenth century. It is not clear exactly when ownership of Wright's farm passed to Charles Letson, Sr., but he is listed as a 21-year old farmer in 1850 and his farm at the intersection with Page Road was used for militia drilling in spring 1862. One or two generations subsequently inherited the farmland. Three years before the CCC Camp was established in 1934, Charles Letsen, Jr. died. A surveyor's map on file at the Hamilton County Clerk's Office shows that his estate included the lot later rented for the camp.⁹³ Letsen left everything in trust to his wife (Isabelle Letsen), two sisters (Alice Jane Behlen and Dora White), and grand-daughter (Mildred Aird). The Peoples Bank of Johnstown, New York, was executor of his will and administered his estate during the life interest of Letsen's heirs. Not until 1959, did the land pass from the estate to the next generation of the Letsen family.

There was a further delay while the seven heirs negotiated the division of the property amongst themselves. Another survey map on file at the county clerk's office shows the location of the 4-H Camp in 1957, with an additional 4-H lease on another parcel of Letsen land.⁹⁴ Eventually, after a quit claim deed and another sale, Donald Stanyon of Gloversville transferred the land to Frederick Rulison of Speculator on August 13, 1963. The deed was subject to the continuation of a lease to 4-H Camp Sacandaga, due to expire February 12, 1964, "with the privilege to the Lessee of renewing the same upon the same terms and conditions for a like [5-year]

⁹³ "Map of Lots 7&8 – Township 2 – T. & C.P. Showing State Lands in Lot 7 & 8 Offered under Proposal 888 in Lot 8, According to a Survey made June 1931 by Albert H. King, State Forester." On file at the Hamilton County Clerk's Office.

⁹⁴ "Map of Lands of Charles Letson Est., Town of Lake Pleasant, Hamilton Co. N.Y., Nov. 1957, William W. Baird, Engr. & Surv." On file at the Hamilton County Clerk's Office.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90

Hamilton Co, New York

Name of Property

County and State

period.”⁹⁵ In 1967, Rulison sold the land to 4-H Camp Sacandaga, retaining the right of first refusal if the land was sold again. The title cleared only after his death in 2007.⁹⁶

The county 4-H organizations running Camp Sacandaga were reluctant to invest in their buildings without clear title to the land. Unfortunately, after this problem was resolved, one of the counties participating in the camp was not able to continue its financial commitment. Hamilton County withdrew from the Camp Corporation in November 1967, leaving Fulton, Montgomery, Oneida, and Warren Counties to carry on the program.

4-H Camp Sacandaga – After 1967 ⁹⁷

Following the land purchase, it took the 4-H council several years to stabilize the existing buildings. From 1968 to 1970, roofs were repaired, dorms painted, and the Recreation Hall re-shingled. In 1972, the back end of CCC Barracks #1 was removed and replaced with Cabin 21. This waney-edge/live-edge structure became the prototype for the development of all later dorms. In the next five years, seven more dorms (Cabins 0-6) were built on the site of the CCC garages by the Glens Falls Seabees. This Navy reserve unit also tore down and rebuilt the old administration building in fall 1979; the resulting Seabee Lodge is now the director’s cabin and camp office. During the 1980s, a barbeque area was built, and an infirmary wing added to the recreation hall. The vacant nurse’s building was remodeled in 1991 as staff housing and renamed the “Swamp.” Electricity was added to the newer cabins in the mid-1990s. Cabin 6 was demolished around 2002 and replaced with Cabins 7 and 8.

The camp closed at the end of the summer season in 2004. Cornell Cooperative Extension (which had acquired the property in 1993) was unable to sell the property for several years. However, the death of Frederick Rulison in 2007 cleared the title, and the property sold (at a much reduced price) in 2010 to Donald and Caroline Naysmith. They made substantial repairs to the buildings over the next three years, to prepare them to reopen as Camp Tekoa, a Christian camp ministering to individuals with special needs and their families. Camp Tekoa renovations include:

- Repair of the foundation of the Recreation Hall; refurbishment of the interior
- Demolition of the old CCC Infirmary (“Swamp”)
- Installation of an in-ground pool
- Installation of a screened porch on the Dining Hall (CCC Education Building); upgrades to its floor
- Repair of the Boy’s Bath House wall
- New septic to Girl’s Bath House
- New roofs on the Boy’s Bath House, Recreation Hall, and Dining Hall.

In 2014, their camp opened for two seasons. In 2016, the camp property was purchased from the Naysmith family with a three-year “lease to own” by Jim Tavares, 4-H camp director from 1994 to 2000. He plans to reopen the site as Camp Sacandaga – a nonreligious camp serving children of all abilities who are looking for a traditional camp experience.

⁹⁵ Deed. Liber 126, Pages 108-113. On file at the Hamilton County Clerk’s Office.

⁹⁶ Specific deeds on file at the Hamilton County Clerk’s Office

⁹⁷ Most of this information on the later years of Camp Sacandaga has been supplied by Jim Tavares, former 4-H Camp Director.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90

Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York

County and State

Recreation and Forestry Legacy of the CCC

4-H Camp Sacandaga is the direct legacy of CCC Camp Speculator, but the indirect legacy of the camp's work for recreation and forestry in New York State is actually much more significant. This one camp impounded Lake Durant with a dam on the Rock River near Blue Mountain Lake; doubled the size of the Caroga Lake and Lewey Lake campgrounds; built the campground at Moffitt Beach; built a swimming area and bridge at the Sacandaga River Campground; improved Poplar Point and Point Comfort campgrounds on Piseco Lake; restored trout fishing on the West River in the town of Wells; fought fires and built seventeen lookout towers and buildings; developed foot trails; and fought forest diseases.

Camp Superintendent Arnold Rhodes reviewed this legacy on the fourth anniversary of Camp Speculator:⁹⁸

During the Summer months of 1934 two side camps were established, one at 34th flow near the village of Blue Mountain Lake and the other at Caroga Lake. At the 34th flow a concrete dam was built on the "Rock River," which created a body of water covering an area of about 400 acres."

The Rock River dam still stands and the Conservation Department, after the creation of Lake Durant, was able to develop a 65-site campground, public beach, and fishing pier which are still in use.

The improvements at Caroga Lake were also significant and kept fifty men employed for three years. The Caroga Lake Campground became hugely popular, with 188,671 visitors in 1939 – almost 15 percent of the total 1,242,071 visitors to all 31 Conservation Department campgrounds in the Adirondacks and Catskills.⁹⁹ Visitors could tent, boat, fish, and swim, all within an hour of Utica, the Capital District, and points in between.

This campsite has been enlarged so as to nearly double its capacity. Greater crowds are accommodated with safety and ease. A new woven fence was built on the campsite. New improved floats were built and a new parking area has been developed and perfected. Plans are being made to beautify this spot with new lawns and general landscaping.

The number of campsites also doubled at Lewey Lake.



Figure 44. Dam on Rock Creek, Lake Durant Campground, Blue Mountain Lake, NY, 2016.

⁹⁸ Most of the information in this section – unless otherwise noted – comes from a contemporary newspaper article – “CCC Camp at Speculator to Observe Fourth Anniversary,” *Amsterdam Evening Recorder*, April 3, 1937, 6. It reproduces (in many cases verbatim) much of the information given by Scott Conroy in 1936 (“Sacandaga Lake Campsite to Be Opened...”). Additional information can be found in the annual reports of the State of New York Conservation Department.

⁹⁹ “Fish ‘N’ Stuff,” *Schenectady Gazette*, May 24, 1940, 9.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90

Hamilton Co, New York

Name of Property

County and State

This site is located in the very heart of the Adirondacks, more than 60 miles from the nearest railroad. It is a virtual paradise for hunters and fishermen, for when you pitch your tent here, where nature is unspoiled, where tall timber still stands, conditions are nearly the same as when tribes of Indians used this spot for their Summer camping grounds.

Lewey Lake is not quite so quiet today but still retains a strong link to its CCC heritage in the supervisor's cabin that greets visitors to the site.

These new quarters are a big improvement over the old quarters furnished for the men. They now have one office, two bedrooms, kitchen, first-aid room and bathroom, with a large fireplace in the office.



Figure 45 and 46. Superintendent's Cabin and shutter detail, Lewey Lake Campground, 2016.



The same type of cabin is found at the Moffitt Beach Campground, the pride of CCC Camp Speculator. Site of Camp 11 (renamed S-59) and just down Page Street from Camp S-90, Moffitt Beach was entirely developed by CCC enrollees:

In the early Summer of 1933, with hardly more than wheelbarrows and shovels to work with, on the east shore of Sacandaga Lake was started what probably is the best designed and developed public campsite in the Adirondack Park. This campsite comprises about 50 acres and has a gradual slope to the lake, thus making it dry at all times. Two hundred individual tentsites have been built with a fireplace on each tentsite. A 10,000-gallon concrete reservoir was built, along with 5,850 feet of pipe line, to furnish water for the campsite; eight of the most modern latrines have been built and also four bath-houses with a capacity of 128 dressing rooms. The bathing beach is about one-half mile in length and is as good as can be found in the Adirondacks. A new caretaker's headquarters has been built.

The original layout of the first one hundred sites survives, with the tent sites spread out on a hillside above the lake. (The number of sites doubled in the 1950s.) The caretaker's headquarters also remains with the characteristic fireplace, shutters, and recessed porch (now screened) found in all the supervisor's cabins built by the men from Camp Speculator.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Similar cabins are found at a majority of the Conservation Department sites where men from Camp Speculator worked.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90

Hamilton Co, New York

Name of Property

County and State

An equal amount of work was put into improving the state campground at Sacandaga River in Wells, but less material evidence of the CCC work survives today. Located at the confluence of the West and East branches of the river, the area was historically known as "The Forks" and had been informally used as a campground since the 1920s when the land became one of the first sites formally developed by the Conservation Department. Hans Held's mural of Camp Speculator enrollees building a bridge is based on the work done on a 166-foot bridge at this campground.

A unique feature of this campsite is that when fully developed it will lie on both sides of the Sacandaga River. The construction of a bridge is the only item necessary to complete this development. The river at this campsite is held back by a dam which provides a good swimming and boating spot.

The dam had been built in 1930 but the river was uncooperative, and the dam needed to be built twice.

In the Spring of 1935, during the severe floods, the abutments of the dam at Sacandaga campsite were washed out to a great extent. Upon the lowering of the water the wings were lengthened out and the abutments made higher and automatic flash boards were constructed to eliminate the recurrence of this danger.

Today, most of this work at the Sacandaga Campground has been lost; the bridge has been replaced and the dam smoothed out, but the abutments of both survive.

Popular Point and Point Comfort are the last two campgrounds where men from Camp Speculator worked. Both sites meet visitors with the distinctive superintendent's cabins, which were integral to the administration of Conservation Department campgrounds.

Upon entering the grounds, the visitor is expected to stop at the caretaker's headquarters, or the registration booth, and sign his name, address and auto license number on the blank provided. Day visitors, or picnickers and swimmers, sign on a regular registration form, while campers are required to obtain a written permit from the man in charge before erecting the tent or parking the trailer coach.¹⁰¹

Last but not least, Camp Speculator made four contributions to Conservation Department programs that are also significant, though less easy to spot today. The department was responsible for managing New York's fish and game for the benefit of fishers and hunters. A small amount of stream clearance was done by the men at Camp Speculator, but they also conducted a larger project to restore trout to the West River.

Prior to the building of the Conklingville dam, West River, in the Town of Wells, was considered one of the best trout streams in the Adirondacks, but upon the completion of the dam new feeding ground was provided for pike and pickerel. This proved disastrous for the trout. It was not long before only the pike were left. The State Conservation Department set out to remedy this very bad plight of the fishermen, with the aid of the CCC. A crib dam of logs was built in the summer of 1934 and a few minor changes made during the Summer of 1935. Thus the pike were stopped from running up the West River, and West River is once again a favorite with the trout fishermen.¹⁰²

The men at Camp Speculator also fought fires (3854 days), constructed fire roads (4.5 miles), and built seventeen lookout towers and buildings. One of the largest was the fire observation tower on Dairy Hill in the

¹⁰¹ "Fish 'N' Stuff." It seems that little has changed except that today there are fewer tents and more "trailer coaches."

¹⁰² The name West River may refer to the Sacandaga River (closed by the Conklingville Dam) or a tributary.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90

Hamilton Co, New York

Name of Property

County and State

Town of Norway, a 79'6" International Derrick tower provided to the state by the US Forest Service and erected in 1934.

This tower was located in open country, and transportation of material being easy the construction was made of heavier steel and lumber than had been previously used in building towers.

In the tower's first year, its staff reported six fires and 568 visitors. It remained in use for 51 years (1935-1986), but was removed in 1991 due to vandalism.¹⁰³

The 1930s were the start of widespread interest in hiking. Enrollees at other Adirondack CCC camps developed access trails to many fire towers and trails in and around the High Peaks; in 1933, Camp Speculator improved 39.2 miles of the Northville-Placid Trail between Benson and Piseco.¹⁰⁴

The last legacy of the camp dealt with forestry restoration. Tree planting was not a major activity for the men, but both tree and plant disease control were. From 1934 to 1939 (when enrollments began to drop), enrollees cleared 10,737 acres of forest land to prevent blister rust and eliminate hosts for plant pests. That is almost 17 square miles of healthy forest that can be attributed to the work of Camp Speculator.

CONCLUSION

Today, it is difficult to recognize the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps in most of New York State. The camps were built to be temporary; almost all traces of the 208 state camps have been lost. A few scattered CCC buildings and archeological sites remain on state land. Projects completed by the camps have blended into later work at campgrounds and parks. Forests have grown to maturity and, in some cases, been cut so that the cycle of reforestation has begun again.

CCC Camp Speculator (S-90) is different. Its legacy can be seen clearly in the buildings preserved by 4-H Camp Sacandaga and in the seven NYS Conservation Department campgrounds built or enlarged by enrollees during the 1930s and early 1940s. Further, 4-H Camp Sacandaga is historically significant in its own right; the 4-H movement began at the beginning of the twentieth century and its camping programs were specifically crafted to educate and support rural youth.

Last but not least, the CCC's work in recreation and forestry is now recognized in light of the movement for environmental conservation. Craig Thompson, former director of the Five Rivers Environmental Education Center, has summarized this legacy.

Ultimately, in protecting forests, improving stream corridors, developing parks and campsites, enhancing fish and wildlife stocks, and maximizing public access to nature, the CCC did much to develop a culture of environmental stewardship in an increasingly involved public, and raised a lofty expectation of perpetual care and continued growth ...¹⁰⁵

For all these reasons, CCC Camp Speculator (S-90) is historically-significant at the state level for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

¹⁰³ "Dairy Hill Fire Tower," *The Fire Towers of New York*.

¹⁰⁴ NYS Conservation Department, *Annual Report to the Legislature* (1933), 41. The N-P Trail was the first project of The Adirondack Mountain Club (ADK) in 1922-1924.

¹⁰⁵ Thompson, 35.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90

Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York

County and State

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Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90

Hamilton Co, New York

Name of Property

County and State

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New York State Library, Albany, NY.

Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, TN.

Personal Communication and Oral Histories

Dr. Eliza Darling, Hamilton County Historian.

Kathleen Duxbury, Historian of the CCC Art Program.

Diane Galusha, Historian of the CCC in the Catskill Region.

Caroline Naysmith, Owner, Camp Tekoa.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90

Hamilton Co, New York

Name of Property

County and State

Martin Podskoch, Historian of the CCC in New York and New England.

Jim Tavares, Former 4-H Camp Sacandaga Director.

Ann Weaver, Town of Lake Pleasant Historian.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90
 Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York
 County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 16.83 acres

UTM References

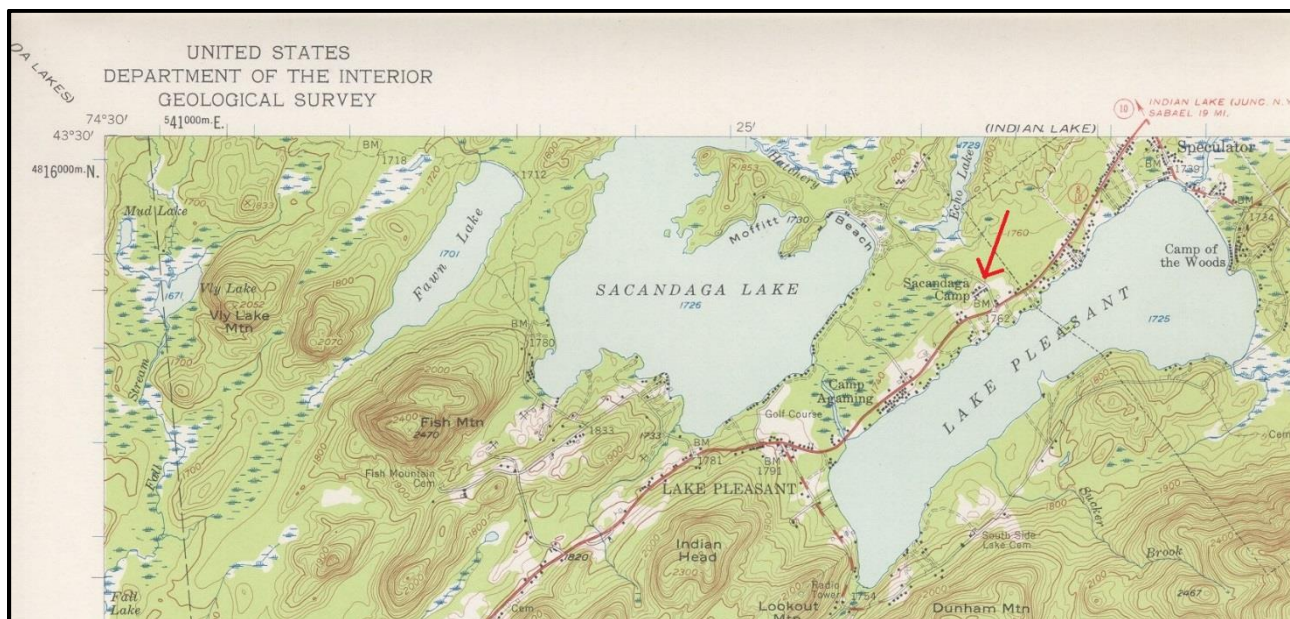
1	18N	549530	4815017	4	18N	549544	4814785
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	18N	549630	4815013	5	18N	549319	4814721
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
3	18N	549729	4814919	6	18N	549254	4814809
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

Verbal Boundary Description

CCC Camp Speculator (C-90) (Hamilton County tax parcel 113.014-1-3) is indicated by a heavy line on the enclosed maps.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

This boundary represents the land purchased by the 4-H from Frederick A. Rulison in 1967 and includes both the land leased to CCC Camp Speculator from 1934 to 1945 and the land subsequently leased to 4-H Camp Sacandaga from 1945 to 1967. One small parcel (113.014-1-2) containing a house was subsequently sold out of the parcel and is not included in this nomination.



1954 US Topographical Map, showing site of 4-H Camp Sacandaga.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90
Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York
County and State



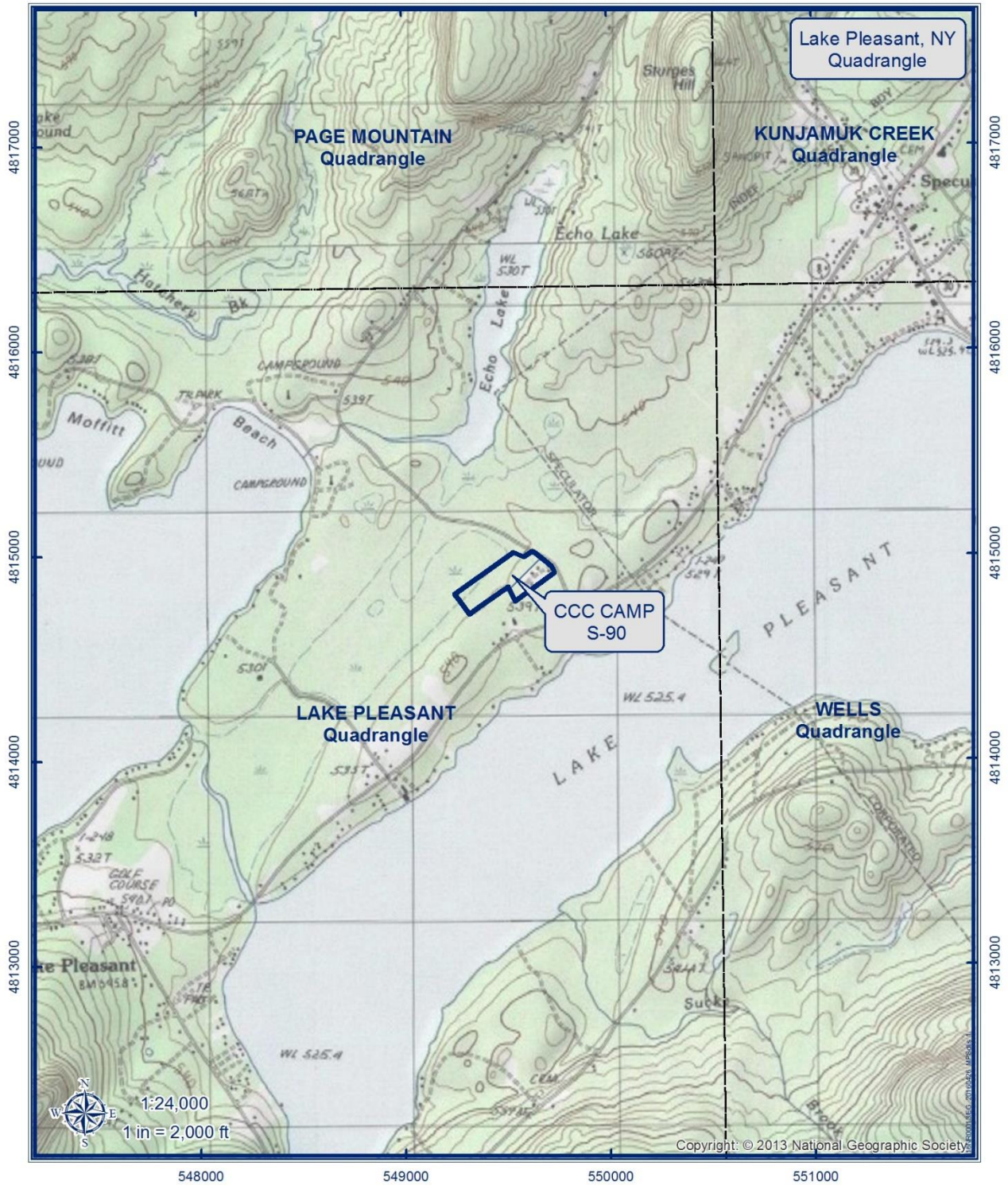
Tax Map, Hamilton County GIS.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90
Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York
County and State

Civilian Conservation Corps Camp S-90 (Speculator)
Lake Pleasant, Hamilton Co., NY

117 Page Street
Lake Pleasant, NY 12108



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter

0 625 1,250 2,500 Feet

CCC Camp S-90



Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90
Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York
County and State

Civilian Conservation Corps Camp S-90 (Speculator)
Lake Pleasant, Hamilton Co., NY

117 Page Street
Lake Pleasant, NY 12108



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter

0 312.5 625 1,250 Feet

 CCC Camp S-90



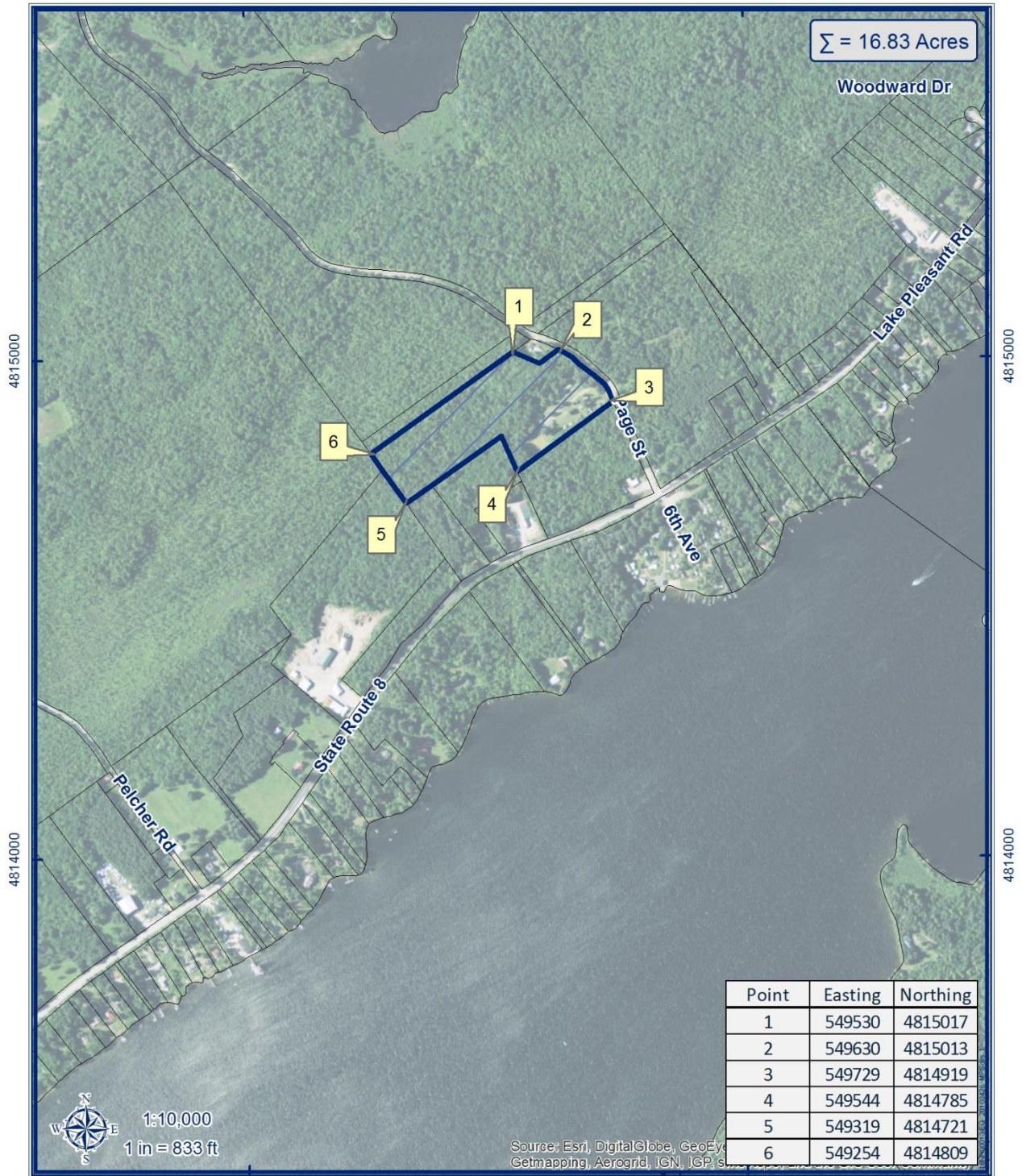
Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90
 Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York
 County and State

Civilian Conservation Corps Camp S-90 (Speculator)
 Lake Pleasant, Hamilton Co., NY

117 Page Street
 Lake Pleasant, NY 12108



Point	Easting	Northing
1	549530	4815017
2	549630	4815013
3	549729	4814919
4	549544	4814785
5	549319	4814721
6	549254	4814809

Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N
 Projection: Transverse Mercator
 Datum: North American 1983
 Units: Meter



CCC Camp S-90



Parks, Recreation
 and Historic Preservation

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90
 Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York
 County and State

Civilian Conservation Corps Camp S-90 (Speculator)
 Lake Pleasant, Hamilton Co., NY

117 Page Street
 Lake Pleasant, NY 12108



Σ = 16.83 Acres

4815000
4814000

4815000
4814000

549000 550000

Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N
 Projection: Transverse Mercator
 Datum: North American 1983
 Units: Meter

0 260 520 1,040 Feet

CCC Camp S-90



Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90
Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York
County and State

Civilian Conservation Corps Camp S-90 (Speculator)
Lake Pleasant, Hamilton Co., NY

117 Page Street
Lake Pleasant, NY 12108



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter



 CCC Camp S-90



**Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation**

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90
Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York
County and State

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Emilie W. Gould (Historic Preservation Program Analyst)
organization NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, & Historic Preservation date March 10, 2016
street & number PO Box 189 telephone 518-268-2201
city or town Waterford state NY zip code 12188
e-mail Emilie.Gould@parks.ny.gov

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90

Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York

County and State

Additional Documentation

Historic Photographs



Detail from Spencer and Wyckoff, "1208th Company CCC, Camp S-90. Speculator, New York," [Commemorative Print], 1938. Adirondack Museum.



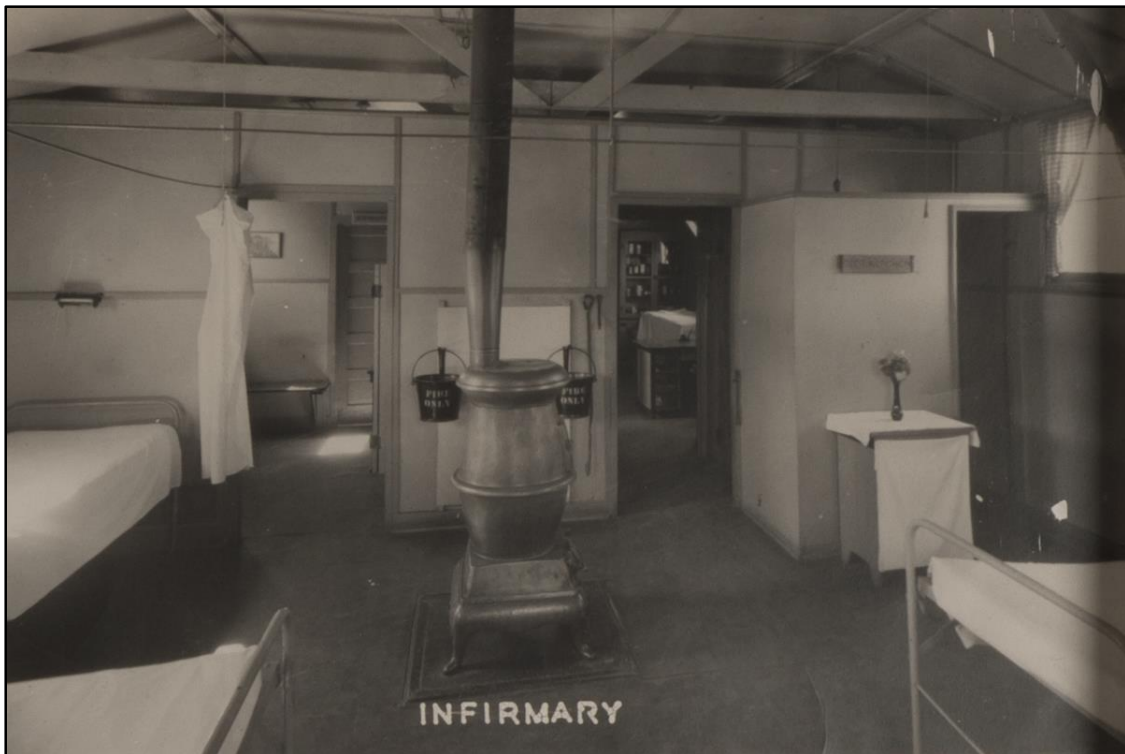
Detail from Spencer and Wyckoff, "1208th Company CCC, Camp S-90. Speculator, New York," [Commemorative Print], 1938. Adirondack Museum.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90
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Hamilton Co, New York
County and State



Detail from Spencer and Wyckoff, "1208th Company CCC, Camp S-90. Speculator, New York," [Commemorative Print], 1938. Adirondack Museum.



Detail from Spencer and Wyckoff, "1208th Company CCC, Camp S-90. Speculator, New York," [Commemorative Print], 1938. Adirondack Museum

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90
Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York
County and State



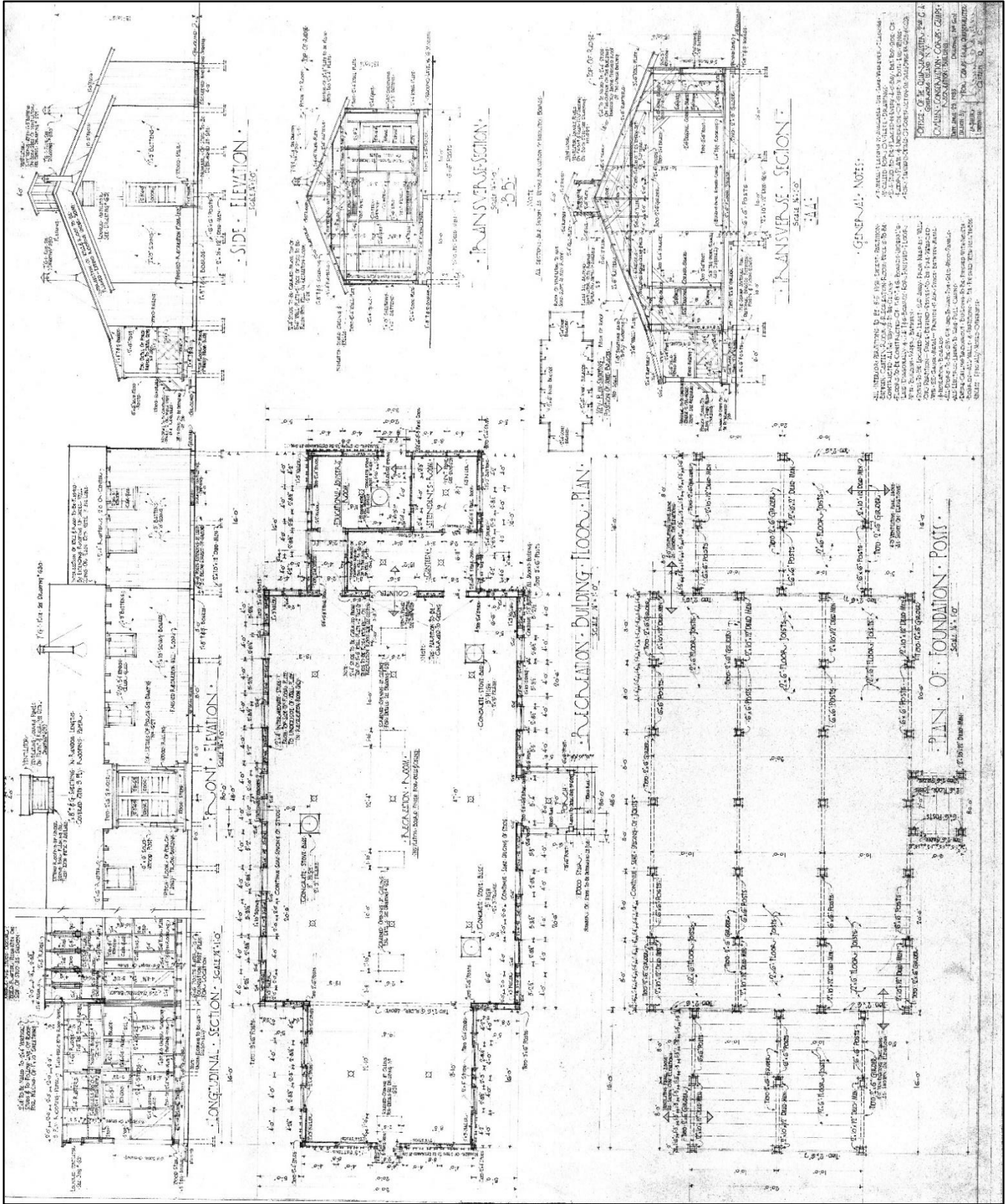
Detail from Spencer and Wyckoff, "1208th Company CCC, Camp S-90. Speculator, New York," [Commemorative Print], 1938. Adirondack Museum



Winter scene, CCC Camp S-90 (Speculator), Lake Pleasant, NY, 1935-42.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90
Name of Property

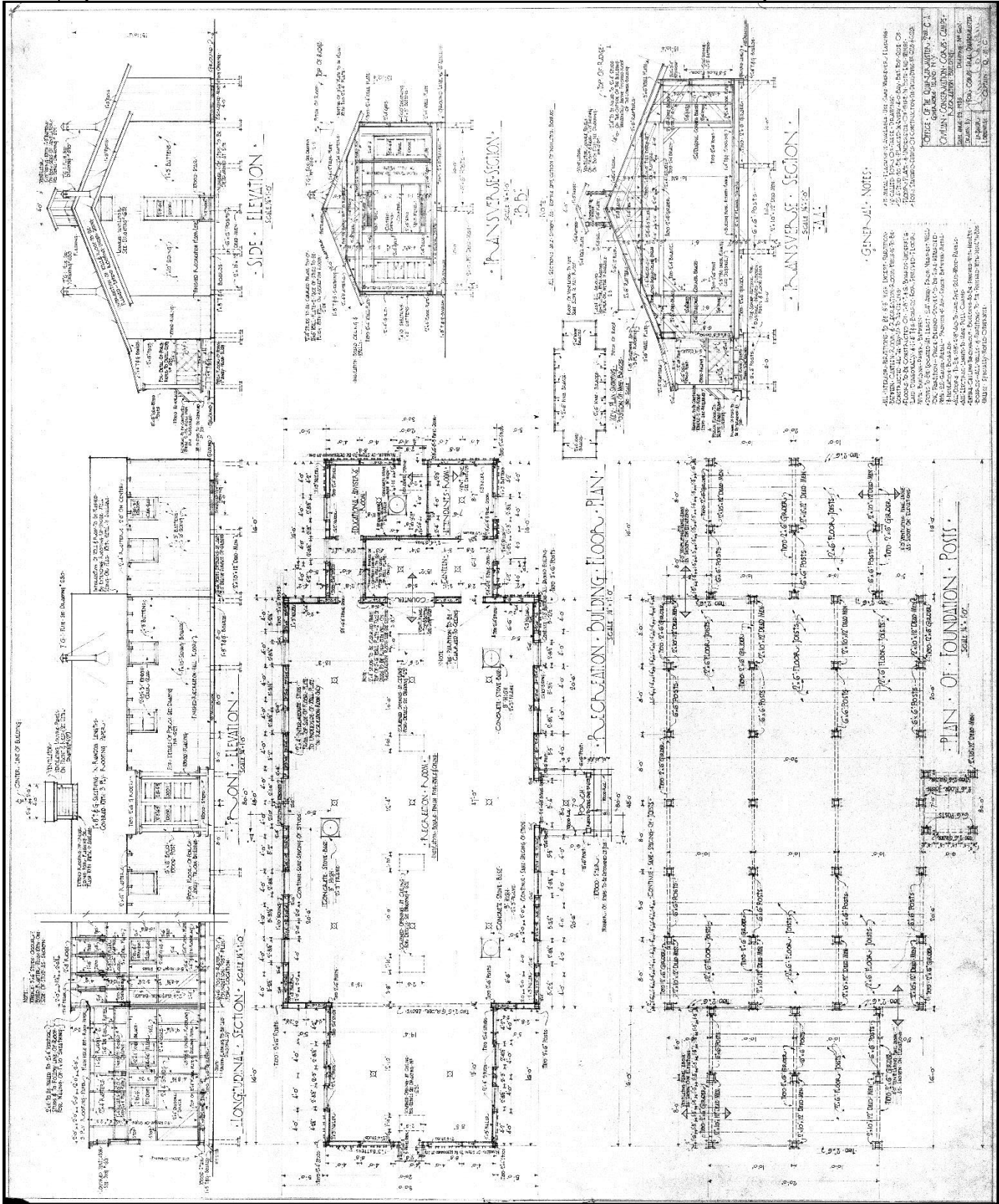
Hamilton Co, New York
County and State



Office of the Quartermaster, 2nd C. A., Civilian Conservation Corps Camps: Recreation Building [Drawing 601] (April 23, 1935). National Archives.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90
Name of Property

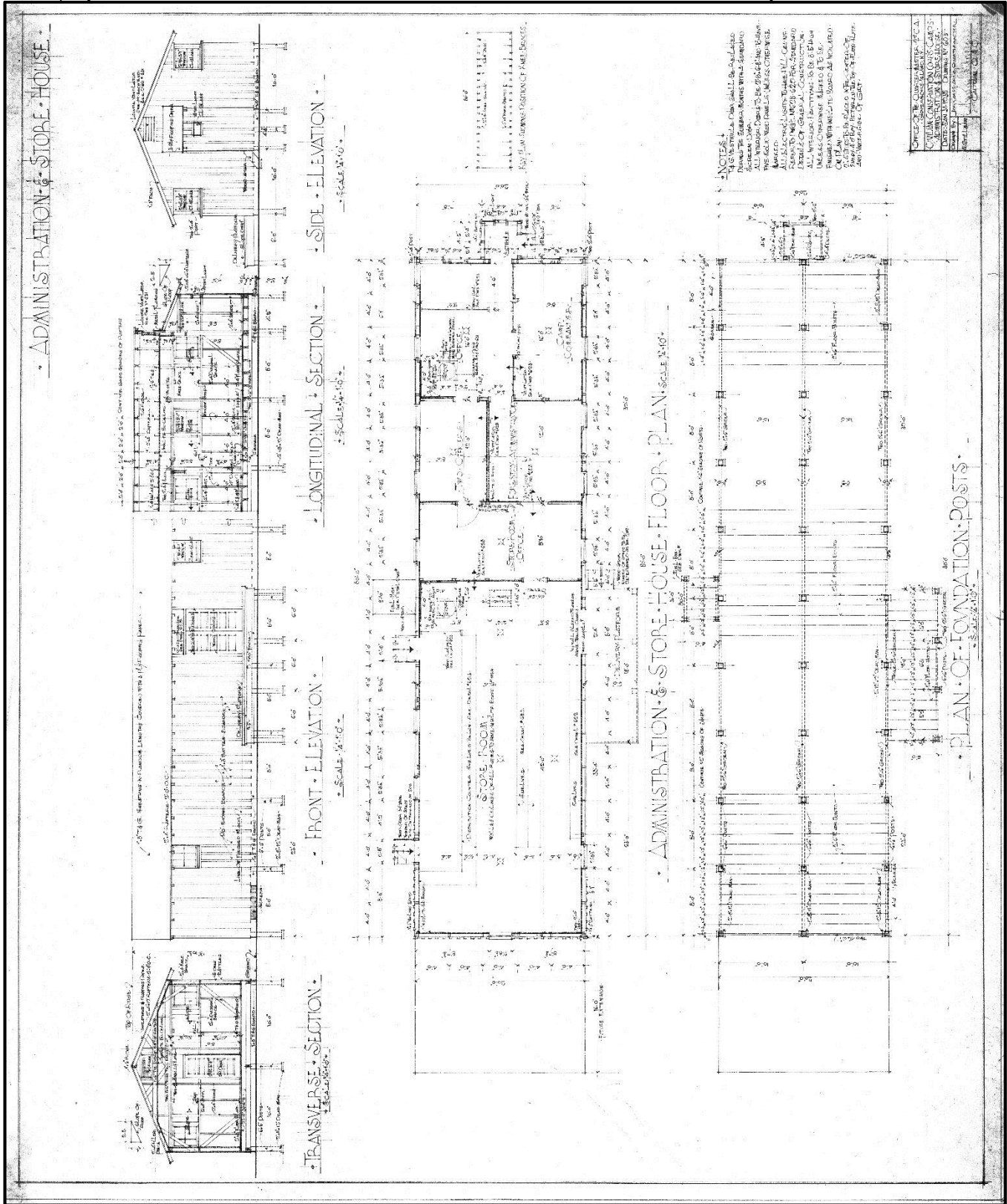
Hamilton Co, New York
County and State



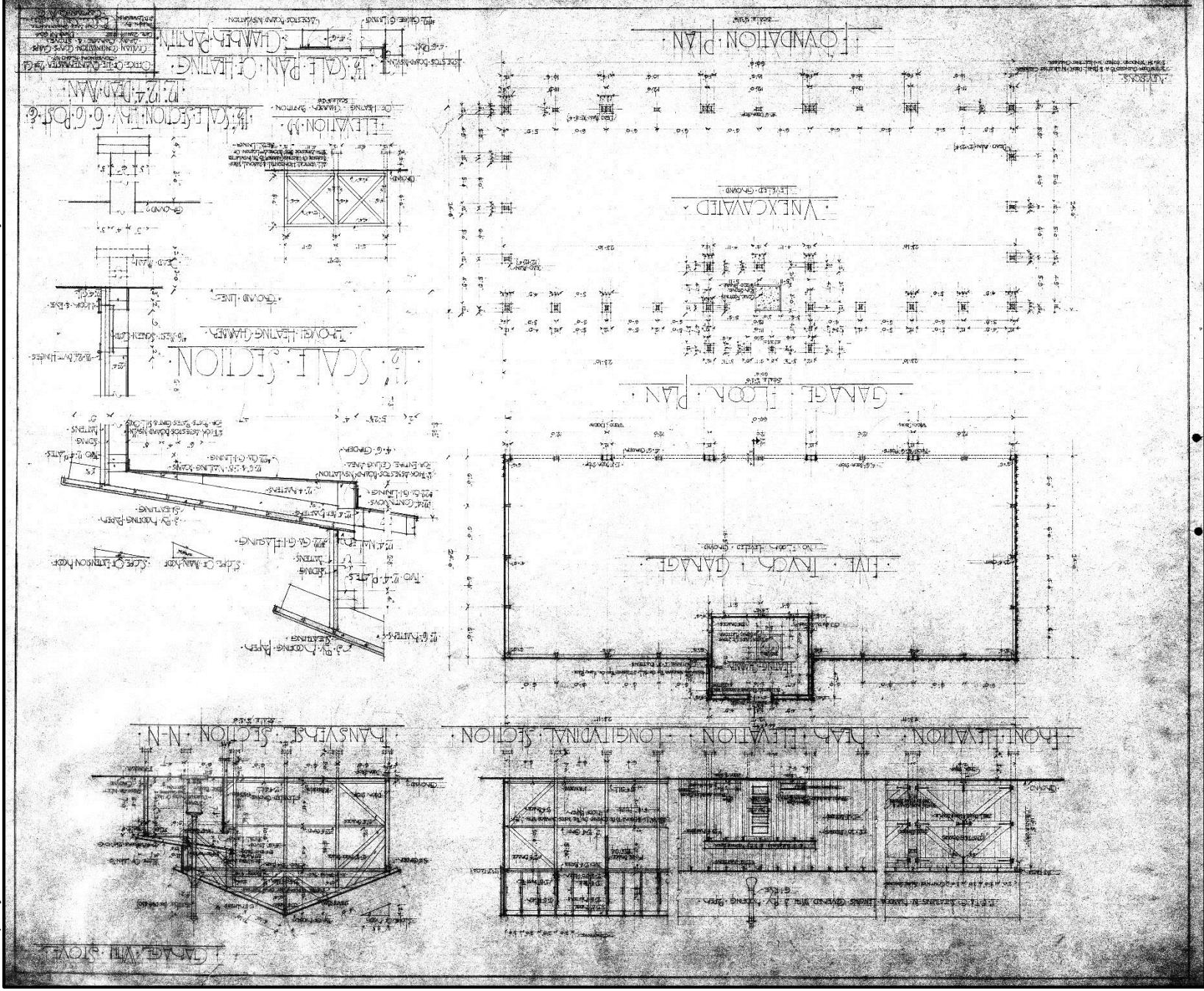
Office of the Quartermaster, 2nd C. A., Civilian Conservation Corps Camps: Dormitory
[Drawing 602] (Jan. 21, 1935). National Archives.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90
Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York
County and State

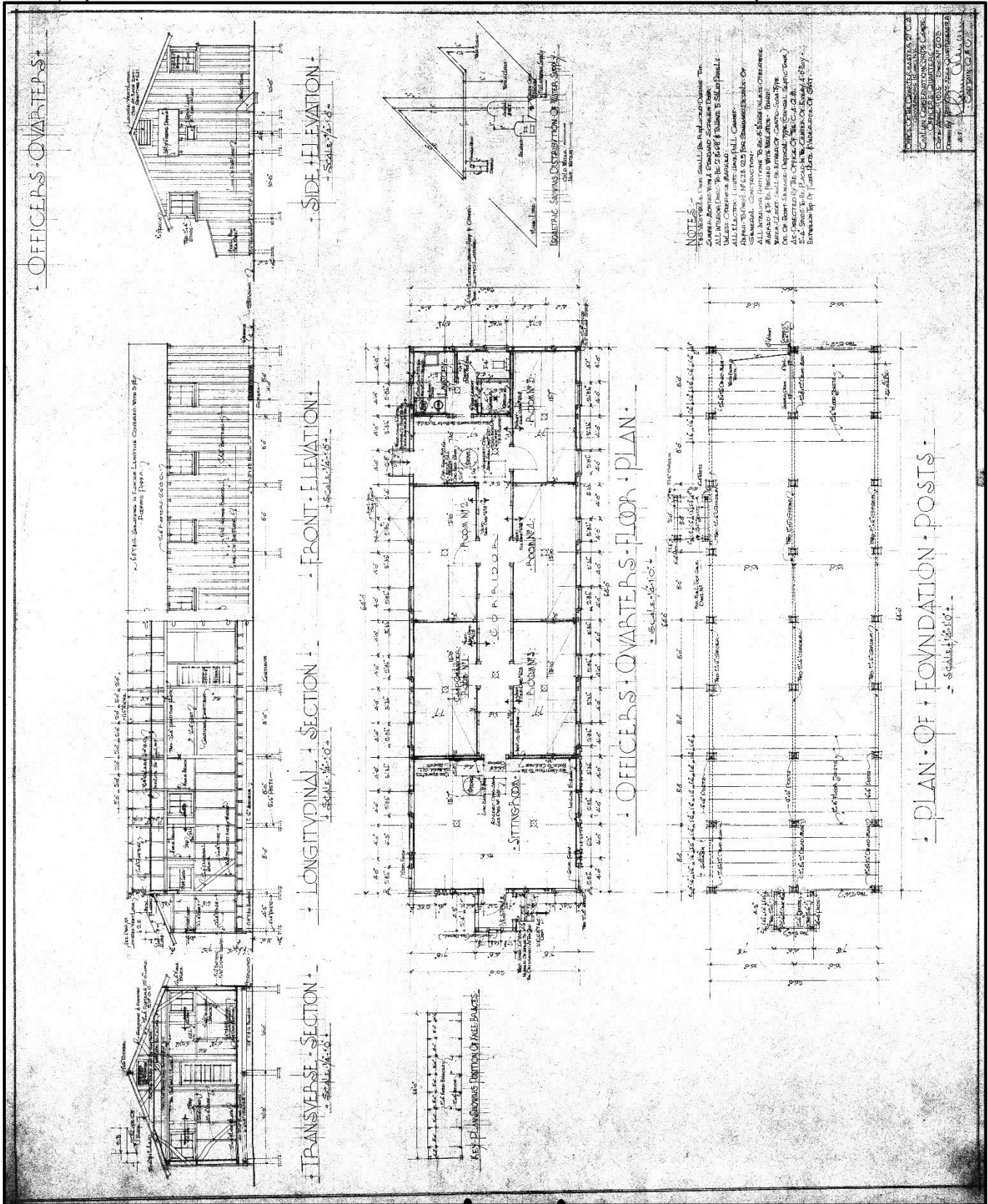


Office of the Quartermaster, 2nd C. A., Civilian Conservation Corps Camps: Administration & Store House [Drawing 603] (Jan. 31, 1935). National Archives.



Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90
Name of Property

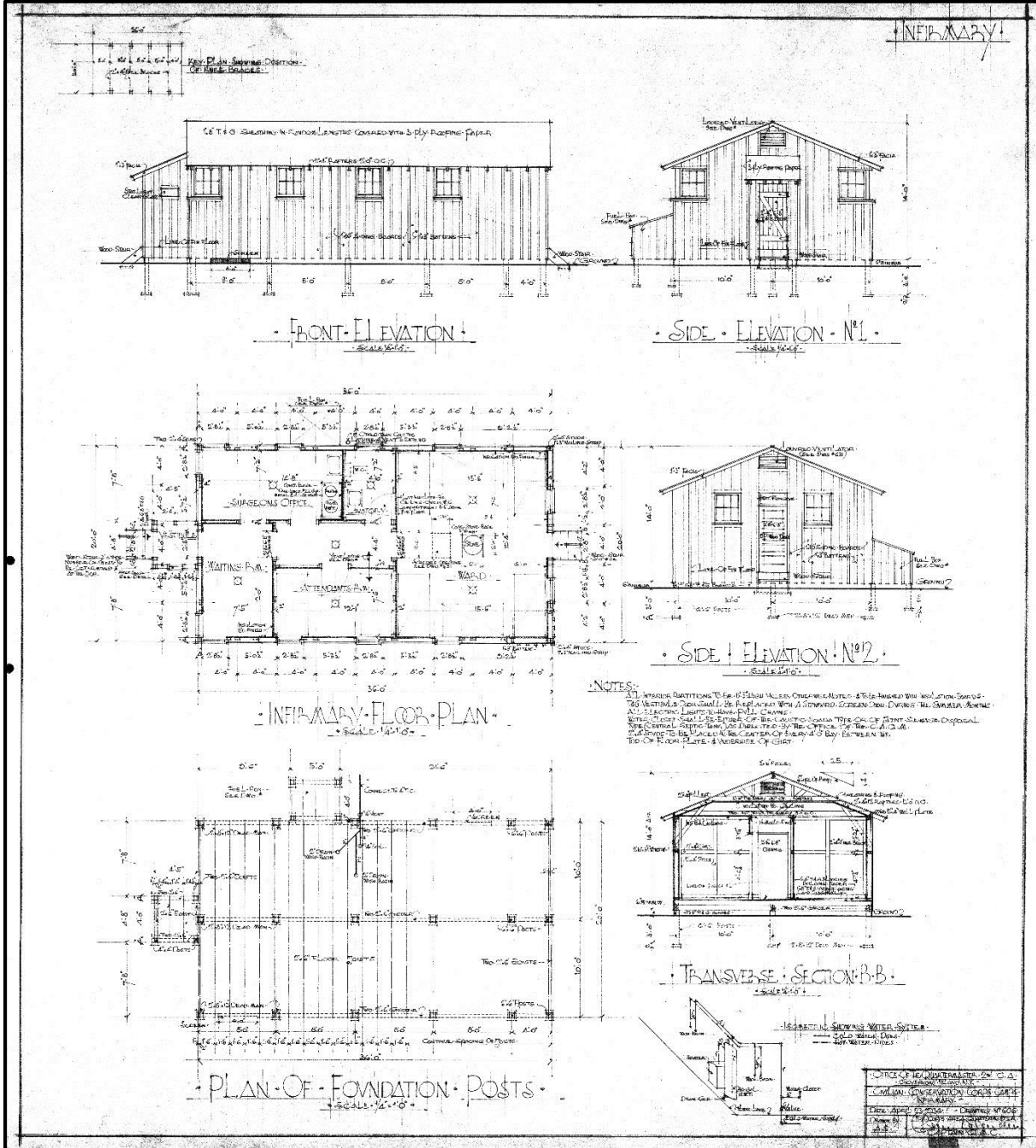
Hamilton Co, New York
County and State



Office of the Quartermaster, 2nd C. A., Civilian Conservation Corps Camps: Officers Quarters [Drawing 605] (April, 11, 1935). National Archives.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90
Name of Property

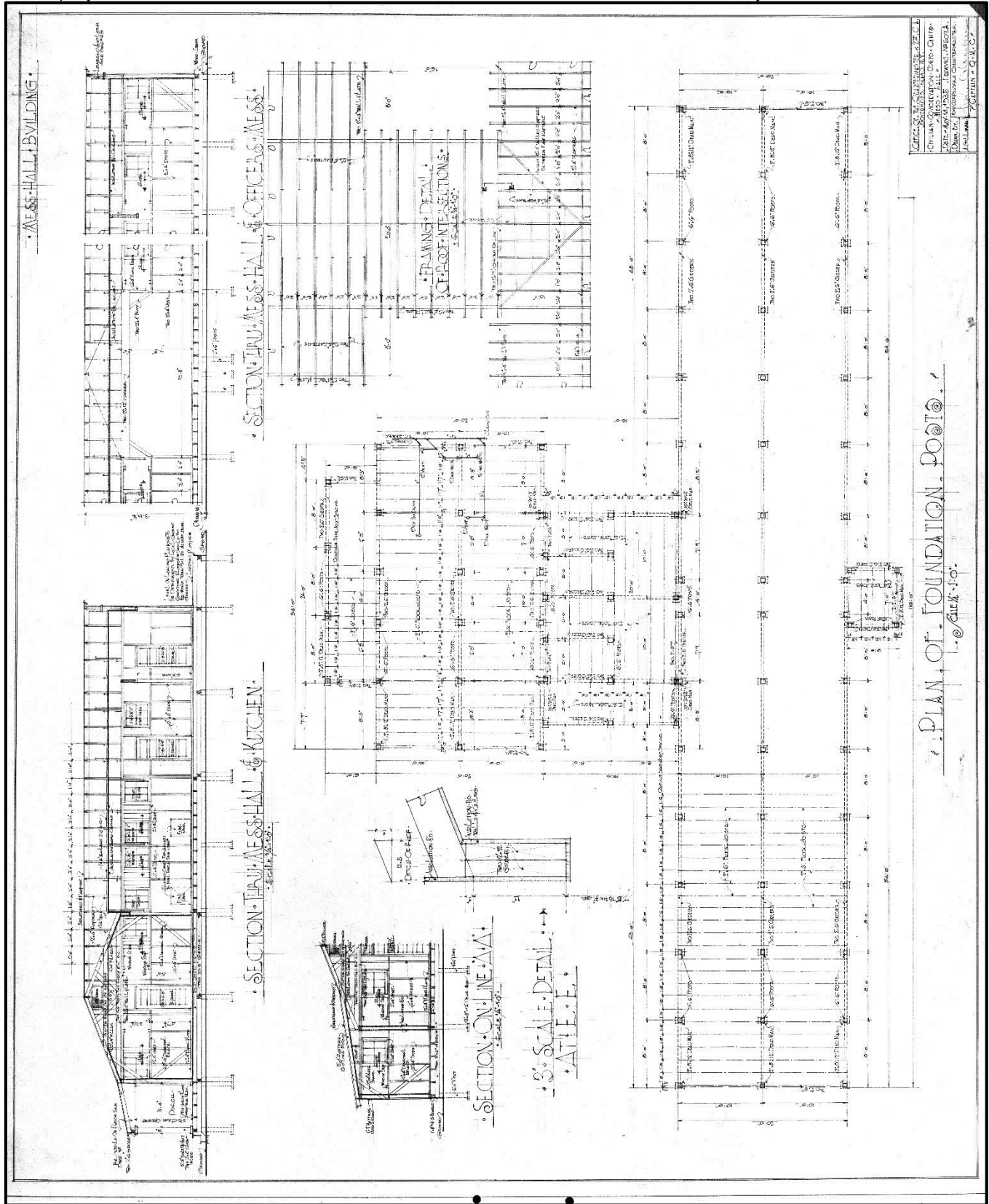
Hamilton Co, New York
County and State



Office of the Quartermaster, 2nd C. A., Civilian Conservation Corps Camps: Infirmary [Drawing 606] (April 23, 1935). National Archives.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90
Name of Property

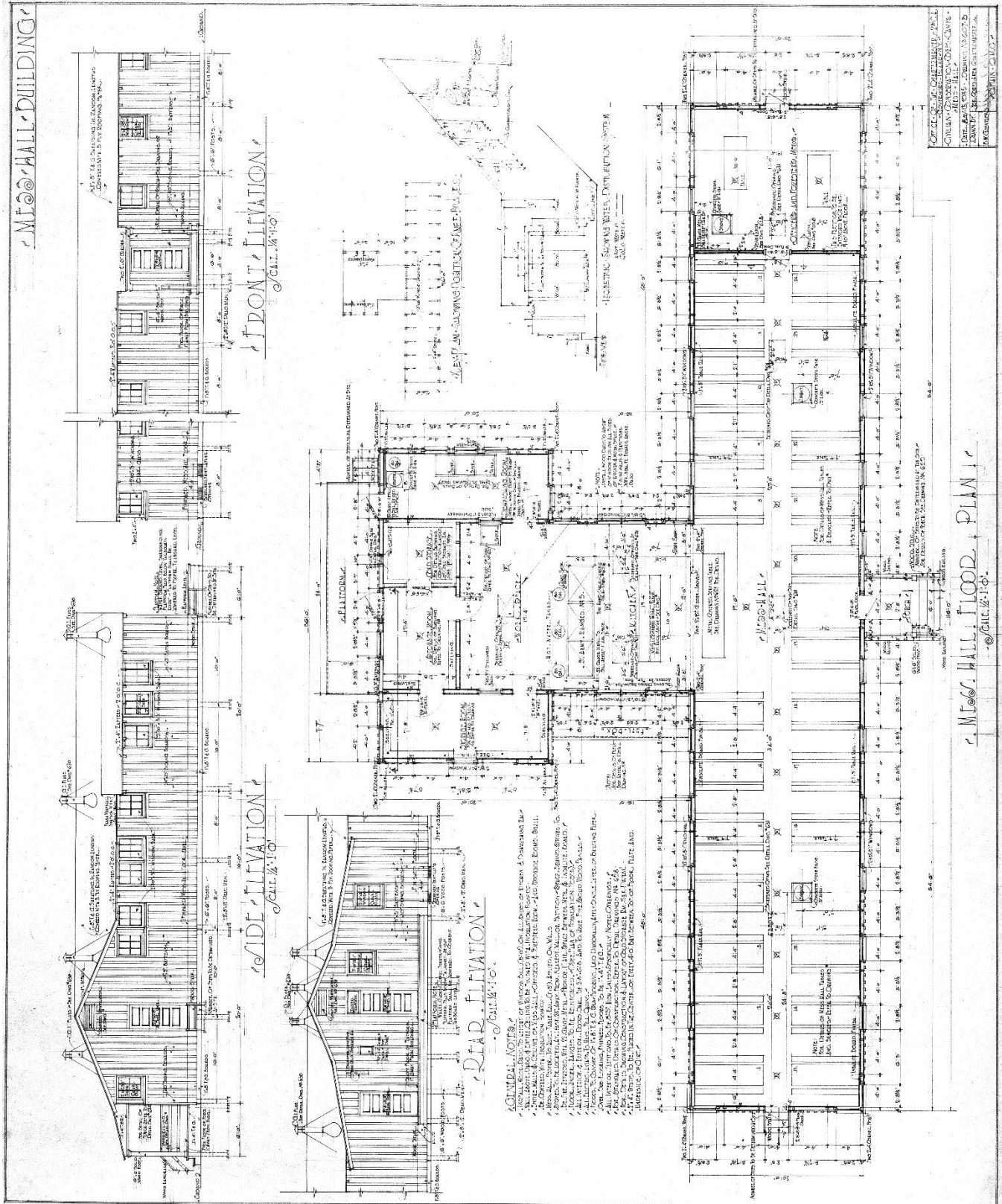
Hamilton Co, New York
County and State



Office of the Quartermaster, 2nd C. A., Civilian Conservation Corps Camps: Mess Hall
[Drawing 607-A] (May 15, 1935). National Archives.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90
Name of Property

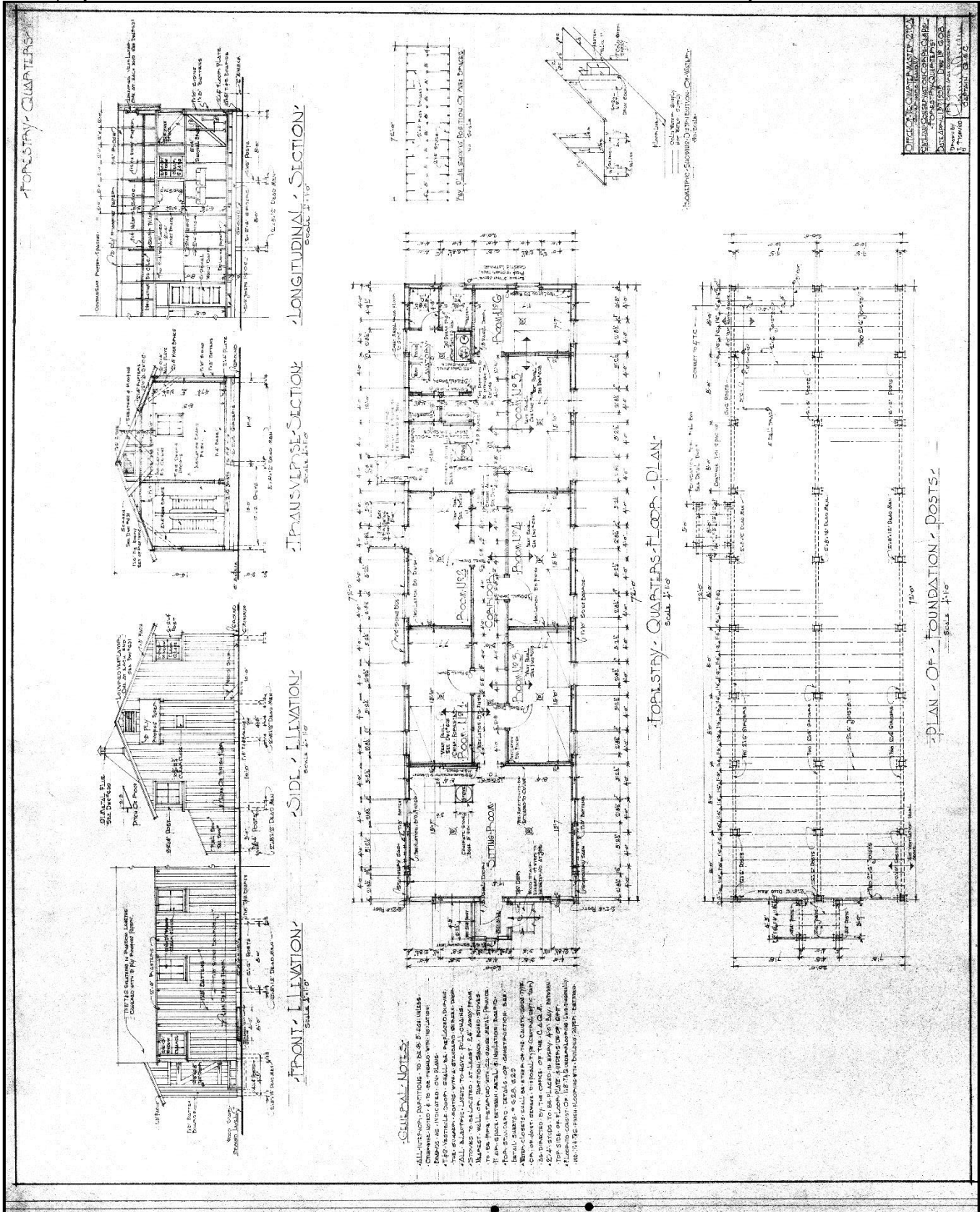
Hamilton Co, New York
County and State



Office of the Quartermaster, 2nd C. A., Civilian Conservation Corps Camps: Mess Hall [Drawing 607-B] (May 15, 1935). National Archives.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90
Name of Property

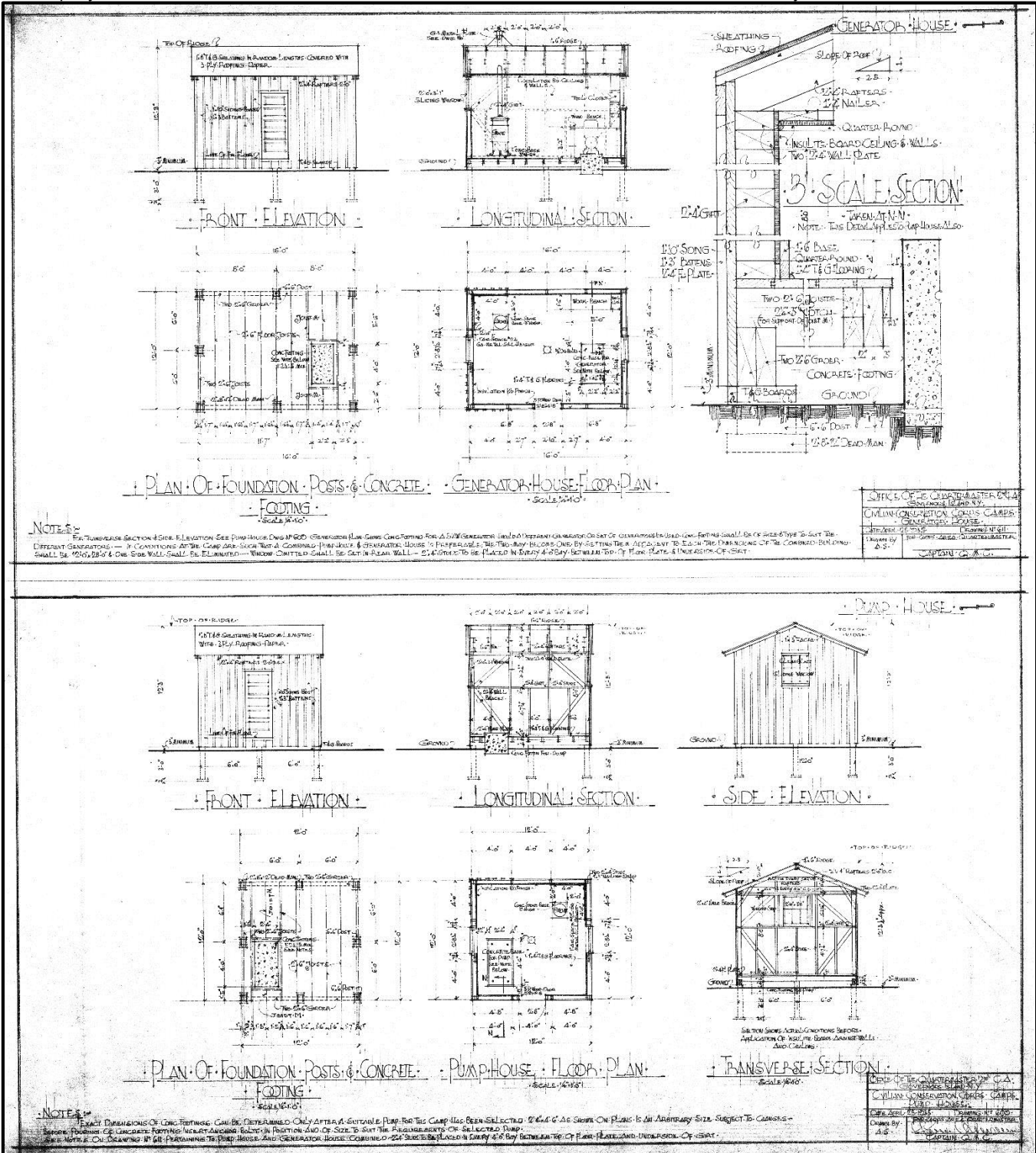
Hamilton Co, New York
County and State



Office of the Quartermaster, 2nd C. A., Civilian Conservation Corps Camps: Forestry Quarters
[Drawing 608] (April 15, 1935). National Archives.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90
Name of Property

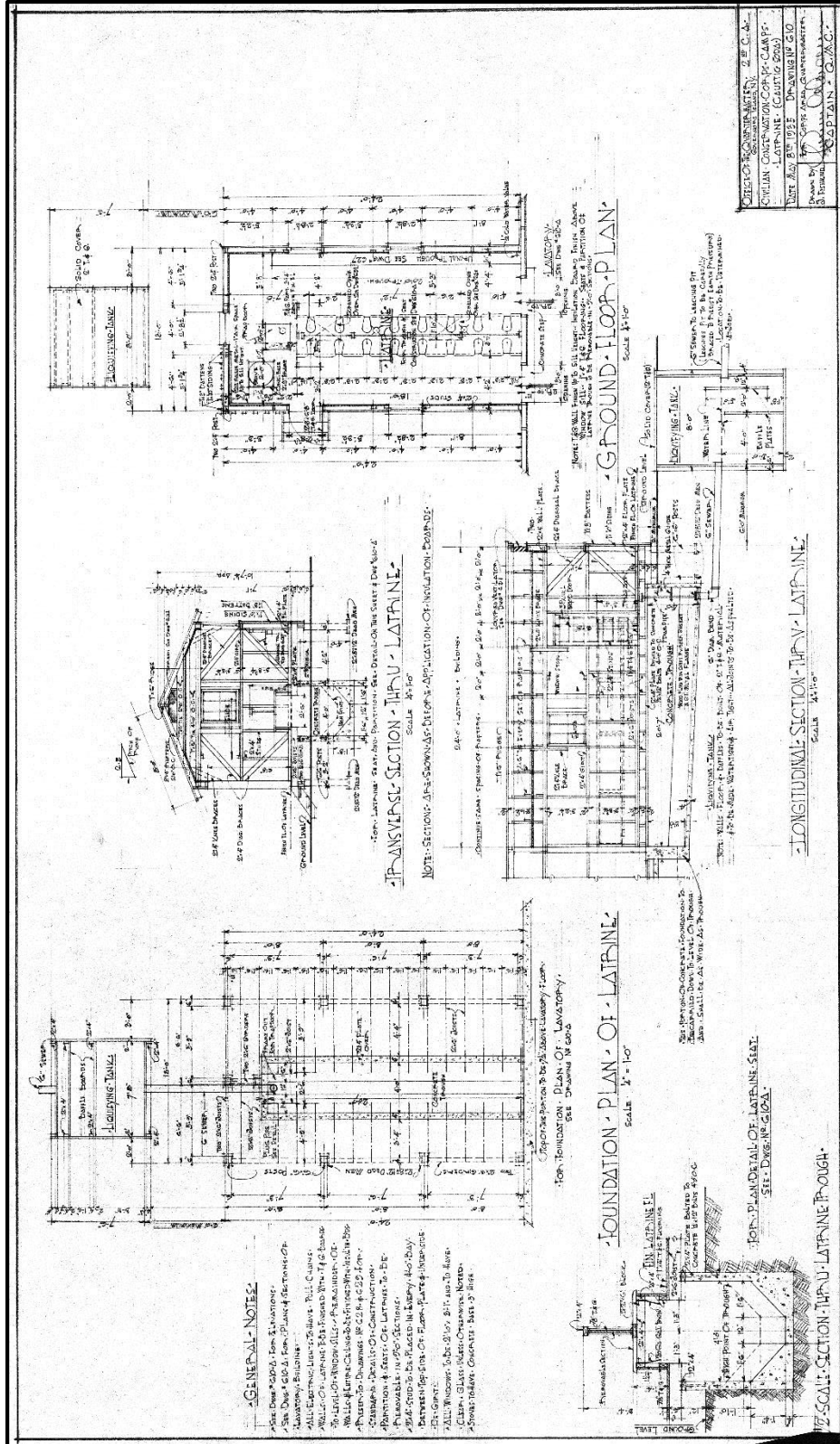
Hamilton Co, New York
County and State



TOP: Office of the Quartermaster, 2nd C. A., Civilian Conservation Corps Camps: Generator House [Drawing 611] (April 25, 1935).
BOTTOM: Office of the Quartermaster, 2nd C. A., Civilian Conservation Corps Camps: Pump House [Drawing 609] (April 25, 1935). National Archives.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90
 Name of Property

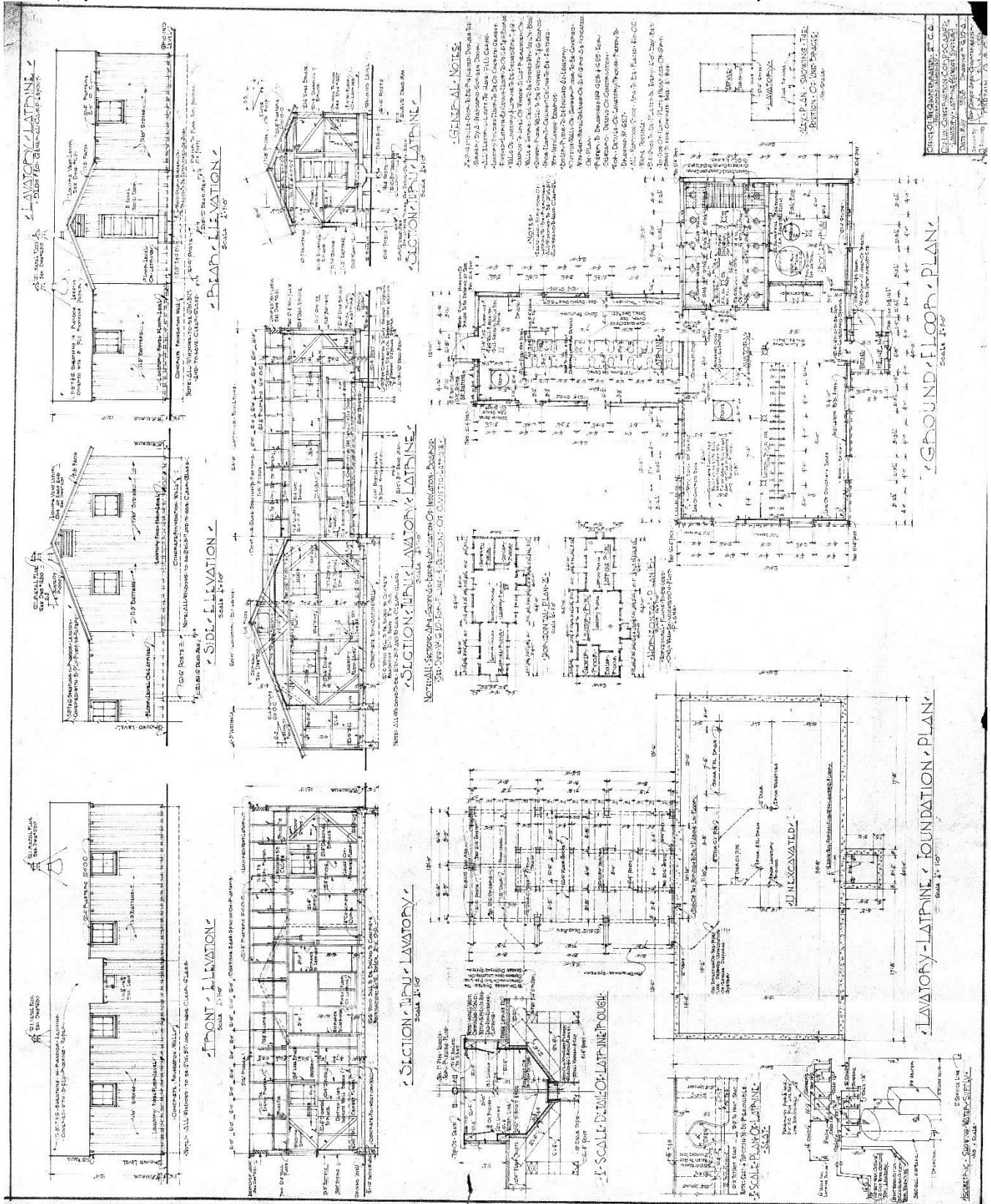
Hamilton Co, New York
 County and State



Office of the Quartermaster, 2nd C. A., Civilian Conservation Corps Camps: Latrine (Caustic Soda) [Drawing 610] (May 8, 1935). National Archives.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90
Name of Property

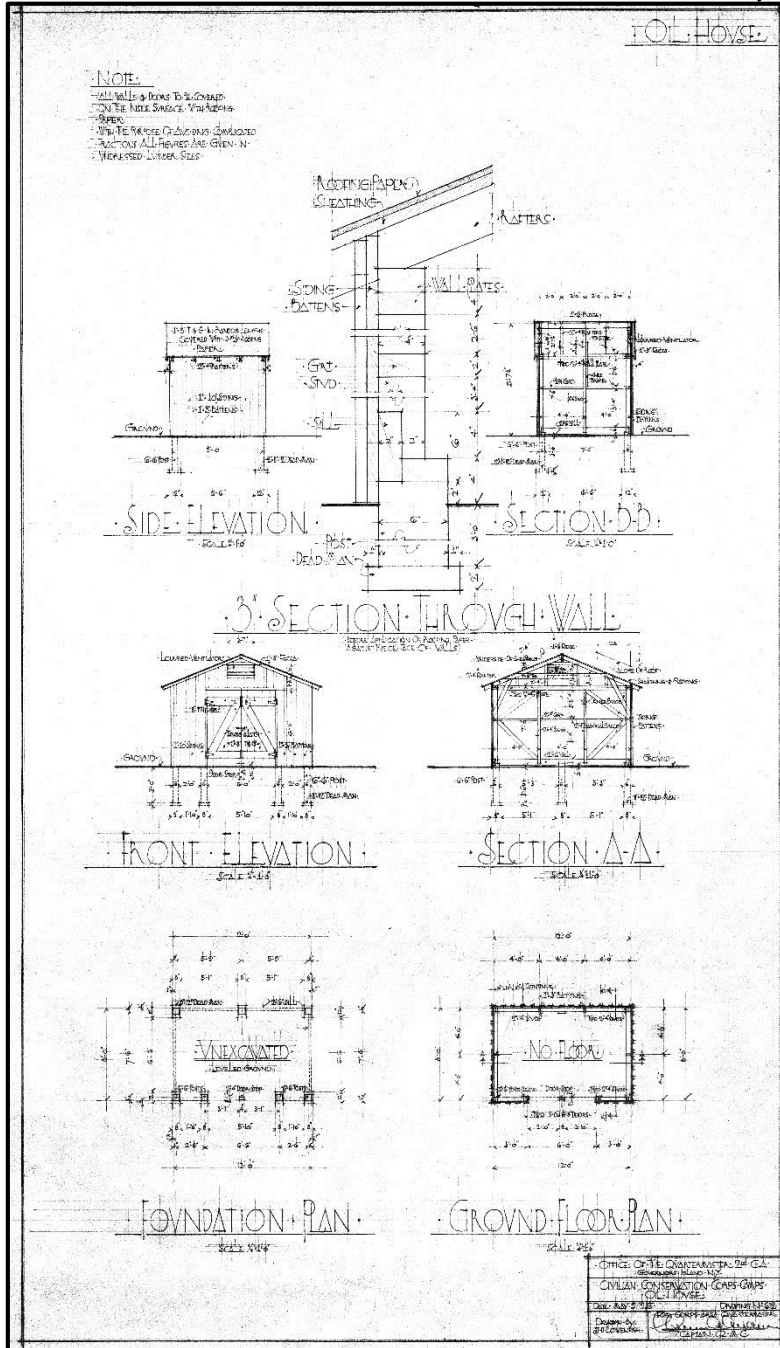
Hamilton Co, New York
County and State



Office of the Quartermaster, 2nd C. A., Civilian Conservation Corps Camps: Lavatory-Latrine (Sewage System) [Drawing 610-A] (May, 1935). National Archives.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90
Name of Property

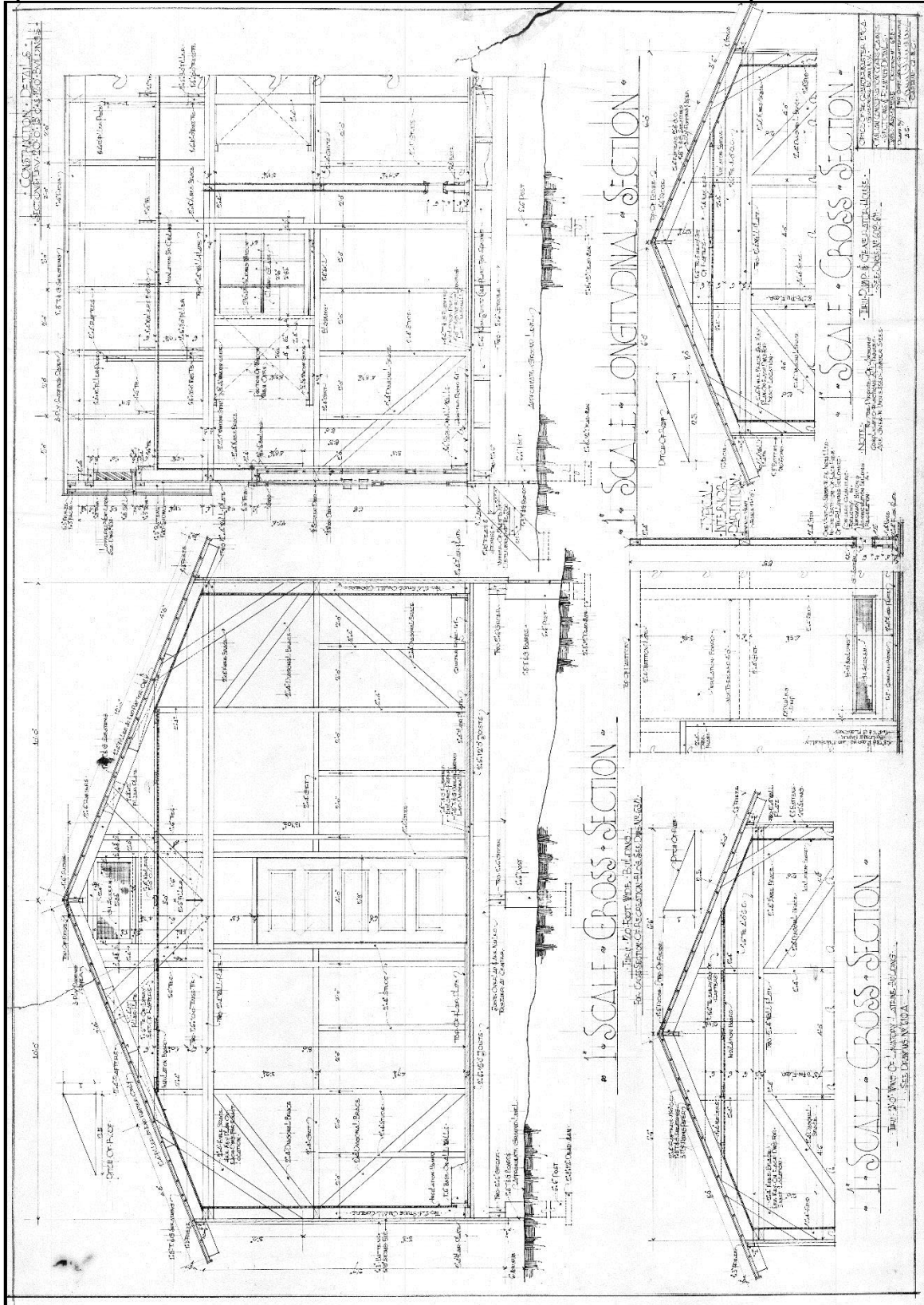
Hamilton Co, New York
County and State



Office of the Quartermaster, 2nd C. A., Civilian Conservation Corps Camps: Oil House
[Drawing 612] (May 2, 1935). National Archives.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90
Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York
County and State



Office of the Quartermaster, 2nd C. A., Civilian Conservation Corps Camps: Sections & Framing Details
[Drawing 628] (May 13, 1935). National Archives.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90

Hamilton Co, New York

Name of Property

County and State

Table of Figures:

FIGURE DESCRIPTION

- 1 Current Site Map with color-coded buildings.
- 2 Camp Speculator (S-90) Gates, late 1930s. Adirondack Museum.
- 3 Camp Speculator (S-90) Gates, 2016.
- 4 Flag Pole site, 2016. Also known as the "Flag Circle" by 4-H Camp Sacandaga.
- 5 Recreation Hall, Façade, 2016.
- 6 Recreation Hall, Rear, 2016.
- 7 Interior, Recreation Hall (north), 2016. Photo from Jim Tavares. Note fireplace at right.
- 8 Replacement CCC Mural, Recreation Hall (east), 2016.
- 9 Entrance to Girls' Bath House showing how building was cut down, 2016.
- 10 Girls' Bath House (half of former Forestry Quarters), 2016.
- 11 Lavatory (now Boys Bath House), Façade, 2016.
- 12 Lavatory (at left) with Latrine wing at rear, 2016.
- 13 Former CCC Education Building in 2010 before addition of 2014 screen porch. Photo from Caroline Naysmith.
- 14 CCC Barracks #2-4, late 1930s, looking west.
- 15 CCC Barracks #1 (later, 4-H Camp Speculator Cabins 9-10), 2016.looking east.
- 16 Interior, CCC Barracks #1 (4-H Camp Speculator Cabins 9-10), 2016.
- 17 Interior, CCC Barracks #1 (4-H Camp Speculator Cabins 9-10), 2016.
- 18 Cabin 0 (Chickadee), built 1977 as the last of the seven cabins built soon after 4-H purchase of camp land. 2016.
- 19 Camp Sacandaga Cabins lined up along south axis of the site, 2016.
- 20 Southern part of the Town of Lake Pleasant. Detail from Asher & Adams, "Herkimer, Hamilton, and Montgomery Counties," *New Topographical Atlas and Gazetteer of New York* (NY: Asher & Adams, 1871).
- 21 Camp 11 (Speculator), later known as CCC Camp S-59, Lake Pleasant, NY, 1933.
- 22 Aerial Photograph, Camp Speculator, 1934. New York State Archives Digital Collection.
- 23 Construction of Barracks at Barnum Pond (Paul Smiths, Camp S-60), circa 1934. New York State Archives Digital Collection.
- 24 Identifying information from plans prepared by the Office of the Quartermaster, 2nd C.A., for CCC buildings. National Archives.
- 25 Barnum Pond Barracks, late 1930s. New York State Archives Digital Collection.
- 26 Camp Speculator Barracks, late 1930s. Adirondack Museum.
- 27 Detail from Office of the Quartermaster, 2nd C. A., *Civilian Conservation Corps Camps: Dormitory* [Drawing 602] (Jan. 21, 1935). National Archives.
- 28 Interior, Barnum Pond Barracks, late 1930s. New York State Archives Digital Collection.
- 29 Interior, Camp Speculator Barracks, late 1930s. Adirondack Museum.
- 30 Detail from Office of the Quartermaster, 2nd C. A., *Civilian Conservation Corps Camps: Sections & Framing Details* [Drawing 628] (May 13, 1935). National Archives.
- 31 Recreation Hall, 2016. Photo from Jim Tavares.
- 32 Detail from Office of the Quartermaster, 2nd C. A., *Civilian Conservation Corps Camps: Recreation Building* [Drawing 601] (April 23, 1935). National Archives.
- 33 Lavatory/Latrine Building, 2016.
- 34 Detail from Office of the Quartermaster, 2nd C. A., *Civilian Conservation Corps Camps: Lavatory-Latrine (Sewage System)* [Drawing 610-A] (May, 1935). National Archives.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90

Hamilton Co, New York
County and State

Name of Property

- 35 Girl's Bath House (Forestry Quarters), 2016.
36 Detail from Office of the Quartermaster, 2nd C. A., *Civilian Conservation Corps Camps: Forestry Quarters* [Drawing 608] (April, 15, 1935). National Archives.
37 Site Plan of CCC Camp S-90 with building list (details of utility lines removed). Adirondack Museum.
38 Spencer and Wyckoff, "1208th Company CCC, Camp S-90. Speculator, New York," [Commemorative Print], 1938. Adirondack Museum.
39 CCC men from Camp Speculator building the bridge at Speculator Campground, late 1930s. Adirondack Museum.
40 Bridge at Speculator Campground built by CCC Camp Speculator, late 1930s. Adirondack Museum.
41 Mural from the Recreation Building at CCC Camp Speculator, circa 1937. Adirondack Museum.
42 View of camp from Recreation Hall, before 1968.
43 View of Boys' Bath Room (CCC Lavatory/ Latrine) at right and rear of Cabins 9-10 (CCC Barracks #1) at left, before 1968.
44 Dam on Rock Creek, Lake Durant Campground, Blue Mountain Lake, NY, 2016.
45 Superintendent's Cabin, Lewey Lake Campground, 2016.
46 Superintendent's Cabin Shutter Detail, Lewey Lake Campground, 2016.

Photographs:

Name of Property: CCC Camp Speculator (S-90)

City or Vicinity: Lake Pleasant

County: Hamilton State: New York

Photographer: Emilie Gould (unless noted)

Date Photographed: March, 2016

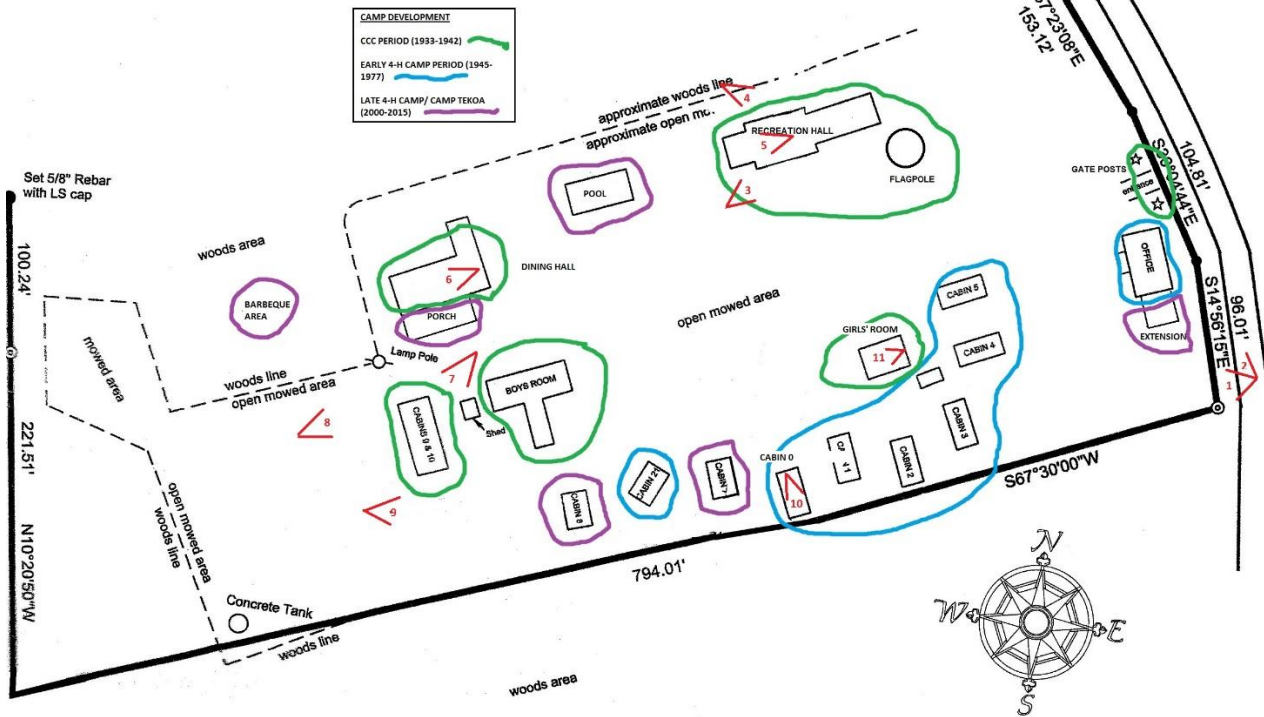
Description of Photographs and number:

- 0001 of 11. CCC Site Showing 4-H Cabins from Page Road (Southeast Corner of Lot).
0002 of 11. Seabee Lodge w 2014 Addition from Page Road (Southeast Corner of Lot).
0003 of 11. Recreation Hall Facade from the Southwest.
0004 of 11. Recreation Hall Chimney (Rear Elevation).
0005 of 11. Recreation Hall Stage (West Wing). Photo by Jim Tavares, June 2016
0006 of 11. Dining Hall Interior. Photo by Jim Tavares, June 2016
0007 of 11. Barracks #1 from the Northeast.
0008 of 11. Main Camp Service Road from Barracks #1.
0009 of 11. Alignment of 4-H Camp Cabins from the West
0010 of 11. Interior, 4-H Camp Cabin 0.
0011 of 11. Roof Trusses in Building #3 (Girls' Bath Room).

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-90

Name of Property

Hamilton Co, New York
 County and State



Property Owner:

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name _____
 street & number _____ telephone _____
 city or town _____ state NY zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS
1934 CCC CAMP S-90 AT SPECULATOR WAS ESTABLISHED. CCC WAS A PUBLIC WORK RELIEF PROGRAM AS PART OF PRESIDENT FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT'S NEW DEAL. YOUNG MEN FROM THE AREA AND OTHER PARTS OF NEW YORK STATE CAME HERE TO WORK. BUILT AND IMPROVED MOFFITT BEACH CAMPGROUND AS ONE OF THEIR JOBS. CLOSED 1942. REOPENED 1947-2004 AS CORNELL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WHICH RAN THE 4-H CAMP SACANDAGA.
HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF LAKE PLEASANT & SPECULATOR





CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS
This building is a historic structure that was built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) during the 1930s. It was used as a cabin for CCC workers and their families. The building is a good example of the rustic architecture used by the CCC. It is now a historic site and is open to the public. The building is located on the grounds of the [Name of Park/Reserve].







EXIT

EXIT











EXIT



EXIT

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Civilian Conservation Corps Camp S-90 (Speculator)

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: NEW YORK, Hamilton

DATE RECEIVED: 6/17/16 DATE OF PENDING LIST:
DATE OF 16TH DAY: DATE OF 45TH DAY: 8/02/16
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 16000485

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: Y SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 8/2/16 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

*A rare example of CCC camp.
Recommend updating for additional bldgs.*

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER Albernathy DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE 8/2/16

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



**Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation**

ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

ROSE HARVEY
Commissioner

RECEIVED 2280

JUN 17 2016

Nat. Register of Historic Places
National Park Service

8 June 2016

Alexis Abernathy
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
1201 Eye St. NW, 8th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20005

Re: National Register Nomination

Dear Ms. Abernathy:

I am pleased to submit the following three nominations, all on disc, to be considered for listing by the Keeper of the National Register:

New York, Westchester & Boston Railway Highbrook Avenue Bridge,
Westchester County
William Connors Paint Manufacturing Company Building, Rensselaer County
Civilian Conservation Corps Camp S-90 (Speculator), Hamilton County

Regarding the CCC Camp, the Hamilton County 200th Anniversary History Fair will be held on August 13, 2016, and the nomination sponsors have requested that, if feasible, the camp be listed before that date, so that the listing can be celebrated as part of the festivities. Please feel free to call me at 518.268.2165 if you have any questions.

Sincerely:

Kathleen LaFrank
National Register Coordinator
New York State Historic Preservation Office