

RED ROCKS PARK, MOUNT MORRISON CIVILIAN
CONSERVATION CORPS CAMP
300 Union Avenue
Morrison
Jefferson County
Colorado

HALS CO-8-A
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

MOUNT MORRISON CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS CAMP, RED ROCKS PARK

HALS NO. CO-8-A

- Location:** Red Rocks Park
300 Union Avenue, Morrison, Jefferson County, CO 80465
Lat: 39.65254 Long: -105.20061 (Google Earth, Simple Cylindrical Projection, WGS84)
- Significance:** The Mount Morrison Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp is part of the Red Rocks Park and Mount Morrison Civilian Conservation Corps Camp historic district. The camp and adjoining Morrison Park comprise 18 acres of the overall 640 acre Red Rocks Park. The camp houses one of the largest collections of intact CCC buildings in the United States; fourteen of the original fifteen buildings are extant along with most of the original landscape features. The location, setting and surrounding landscape maintain a high degree of integrity, making this an excellent example of cultural landscape offering a sense of place and time into the daily life of a Civilian Conservation Corps Camp. The men who lived at the camp built the nationally acclaimed Red Rocks Amphitheatre.
- Description:** The Mount Morrison CCC Camp location was selected because it was suitable for the establishment of a CCC Camp: “the site was well protected from weather, well drained, and had an altitude of 6100’ and a general northeast slope.”¹ The site was ideal because it had electricity, a potable water supply from Bear Creek, a paved road and the highway distance from the shipping point to the campsite was 15 miles. The camp location offered an appealing setting with Bear Creek to the north and rock monoliths and outcroppings of the Fountain Formation of Red Rocks Park discernable from within the site. The camp was close to the Town of Morrison and became a benefit to the local economy. The men generally made a salary of thirty dollars a month with twenty-five dollars of the monthly wages being sent home to their families; the men locally spent the other five dollars.
- Fourteen of the original fifteen buildings remain, containing examples of all the building types associated with a CCC camp. The camp includes: barracks, officers’ quarters, mess hall and kitchen, recreation hall, latrine and washrooms, workshop, blacksmith shop, garages, camp road, and bridge.² Most of the camp buildings have a northwest to southeast

¹ United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, State Park Division, *Camp Application*, 1934.

² Deon Wolfenbarger and Susan Baird, National Historic Landmark Nomination: "Red Rocks Park & Mount Morrison Civilian Conservation Corps Camp 2010 Draft," on file at National Park Service, Intermountain Regional Office, Denver.

orientation and are simple one-story wood framed structures with gabled roofs and a rectangular configuration. Some of the structures are constructed on wooden blocks or built into the slope on the south side in order to accommodate the grade. The structures were meant to be temporary, modeled on military designs. The camp was transferred to the City of Denver on January 21, 1943, and is currently the maintenance area and field offices for Denver Mountain Parks and has been maintained with respect to the historic integrity of the site.

The elemental composition of the landscape and buildings of the Mount Morrison CCC camp remains intact giving a unique survey of the daily life of the men who lived and worked within this camp. The camp was shaped not only by its physical form and building layout, but also through the use of the CCC era men. Their recreational activities included golf, volleyball, croquet and baseball in and around the camp. They planted native grasses, spruce trees and lilac bushes around the site enhancing the physical beauty while keeping the natural character of the surrounding landscape. The vegetation planted during this era has matured and the roads and paths have been adjusted slightly, but the ethos of the CCC era remains intact. The Mount Morrison CCC Camp is an excellent cultural resource retaining an elevated degree of integrity while demonstrating the nuances distinctive to the CCC era.

Topography

The site is located on a hill and has a gentle upward slope beginning at the north entrance just over the bridge built by the CCC men. The area in this section housed the work buildings; the toolshed, garages, maintenance office and blacksmith shop. These structures are close together, just off the main road with little to no outdoor space for public activity. The southeast section of the site sits on higher ground and contains the residential portion of the camp: barracks, mess hall, recreation hall, headquarters, officer quarters, infirmary and latrine. The buildings in this area are space equidistance with a north south aspect allowing for indirect morning and afternoon sun. The buildings all have a view of the magnificent Fountain Formation sandstone outcroppings in Red Rocks Park. The distance between the barracks is approximately 50' - 0" - 60' - 0" apart allowing for a grass lawn between the buildings with a scattering of shrubs such as lilac bushes.

Like Red Rocks Park to the north, the camp features a backdrop of the dramatic red Fountain Formation sandstone monoliths and low semi-arid hills of the Rocky Mountains; this is where the Great Plains meets the

Rockies.³ The site slopes to the north allowing for drainage into Bear Creek. There have been minimal changes to the grading since 1936 and the camp topography is virtually the same as it was during the CCC era.

Automobile traffic was kept to the outer boundary of the camp; therefore, the men generally walked from one building to the next forming many pedestrian paths with the central axis being between the barracks. Bear Creek, which rims the camp to the north, can be heard from anywhere within the camp. When the site was first developed, there were very few trees in the area, so there was little shade from the bright sun of Colorado until the trees grew. The barracks area is circled by the surrounding hills offering an intimate sense of enclosure to the space where the men lived and worked while having an unobstructed view of the sky. The scale of the buildings, spacing and number, is not overwhelming in the landscape. The buildings are one story high and now overshadowed by the trees, which have grown over time. The siting of the camp blends in well with the topography, assigning maximum use of slope, aspect and appropriate scale for the construction of the Mount Morrison CCC Camp.

Circulation: Roads and Parking

There are two entrances in the camp, the north entrance leading to the maintenance area and the south entrance that connects with Red Rocks Lane. The road winds eastward through the camp, branching in several places before it exits at the southern entrance to the camp. Originally dirt and gravel, several areas are paved with asphalt. The central area housing the barracks remain dirt and gravel with narrow leaf cottonwood and spruce trees lining the drive in front of the former headquarters building. The main entrance to the camp is located off Colorado State Highway 8 and Union Avenue, crosses over a bridge built by the CCC men, which spans Bear Creek. The road leads to the maintenance area of the camp, which houses the garages and maintenance workshops. Here is where the drive splits, with a smaller service road going behind the garage and toolshed. The main drive leads to the parking south of Garage #2 then curves, climbing southeast towards the central part of the camp where the barracks, mess hall, recreation hall, and former headquarters building are situated. Before the road enters the primary segment of the camp, a fork extends behind the playhouse and leads to an open area used for parking and storage. This smaller spur rejoins with the main road before it enters the residential section of the camp.

³ Ibid. 8.

Upon entering the residential quarter, the road once again diverges. A straight drive continues southeast in front of the former headquarters building and the main road turns southwest. The smaller road along the headquarters building is lined on the side opposite the building with spruce, cottonwoods and lilacs. It continues past the end of the building curving southwest between the two rows of barracks until it rejoins the main drive encircling the camp. This road originally ended at the eastern end of the Headquarters Building; by 1955 the road was extended between the barracks in order to rejoin the main road (see figs. 2.2-2.4). The main road continues east and out of the camp at the East Entrance where it connects with Red Rocks Vista Lane. The main road borders the camp but is not a loop road.

The road was originally dirt and gravel with parts of the road covered with asphalt. The southern segment of the road behind Barracks #3, and the recreation hall and spur road behind the garage and shop are gravel and dirt. Traces of the original dirt road are detected in the 1930s aerial photograph and can still be discerned behind the Headquarters Building and Barracks #2 (see fig. 2.1). The spur road around the Playhouse leading to the old water plant is clear in the 1955 aerial image (see fig. 2.4) but was a dirt path prior to 1937 (see fig. 2.2) and 1948 (see fig. 2.3); therefore, this spur road was not part of the original road system. The spur road that runs behind the garage and shop was built sometime between 1955 and 2010 (see figs. 2.4, 2.5).

The road became clearly defined between 1937 and 1948 as the vegetation began to grow and new camp uses changed the requirements of the site. The parking lots were expanded, primarily around the garages (figs. 2.2-2.5) and a section of the original road was no longer in use between the Latrine and Recreation Hall (fig. 2.2). The original roads have the same alignment and cross-section, thus retaining integrity in all aspects except materials.

Circulation: Footpaths

Some, but not all of the original footpaths are still in use today. The paths around the site clearly mark direct routes from the barracks to the latrine, mess hall, headquarters building and flagpole circle. There is a difference in the circulation pattern of from 1937 and 1948. Social paths or paths which emerged due to the camp's inhabitants seeking a different route to the desired destination, were added to the designed paths from 1937 creating an intricate lace pattern threading it's way around the camp. By 2012, the original paths are indistinguishable by satellite or by foot. The paths from the 1937 and 1948 aerial images are almost nonexistent in the aerial image from 2010 (see fig. 2). Many of the original paths are overgrown due to the significant decrease in foot traffic and amended use of the site. The best

example of a footpath from the CCC era is on the east side of the current Denver Mountain Parks offices. On that footpath a bridge extends over the artificially fed drainage flowing from the water plant in the southwest part of the camp (see fig. 2.2). The path is made of compacted dirt with rocks lining the edges. The footpath leads to the northeast side of the headquarters building and is approximately 115'-0 x 3'-0 in length and width. During the 1930s, the footpaths within the camp were heavily used, but by 2010 a noticeable deterioration of the original system is evident (see fig. 2). The trails that originally led from the camp to the trout ponds and the park are no longer visible in the 2010 aerial image. The trout ponds are now located on private property. The flagpole encircled by lilac bushes still has the openings for the entrances leading into the circle with clear axes but the paths are less visible.

Designed Landscape Areas

The CCC camps became a second home to many of the men since they lived, worked and recreated on or near the site. They worked on many improvements including; plantings of trees, grasses and shrubs, kitchen gardens, and building areas for recreational activities such as horseshoe pits and ball diamonds. The men at the camp also worked on learning and improving skills by working on projects within the camps such as the building of rock walls, park benches and buildings. Members of Company Sp-13-C built a log cabin school building in their spare time as an education work project,⁴ in order for it to be used as a craft shop and school room.

Many of the landscape improvements in the camp were completed by Company 1860 while waiting for work to proceed at Red Rocks Park. During the time period from May 1937 through June 1938, improvements within the camp and Morrison Park included: planting the lawn with flowers and shrubbery, a golf course, croquet court, horseshoe courts and ball diamond.⁵ It is not clear if all of these improvements were located within in the camp or in the adjacent Morrison Park. Indications of landscaping by the CCC men are detected throughout the camp. An allée of Narrowleaf Cottonwood and Spruce trees line the front of the former Headquarters Building and the plantings of lilac bushes around the camp have matured. Tree core samples from four trees in the allée next to the road in front of the Headquarters Building and the area between it and Barracks

⁴ L.A. Gleyre and C.N. Alleger, *History of the Civilian Conservation Corps in Colorado Summer 1936* (Denver: Press of the Western Newspaper Union, n.d.), 79.

⁵ Ibid. 79.

#5 are currently being analyzed.

A stand of lilac bushes encircles the flagpole area; this is where the men gathered and stood at attention in front of the flagpole for roll call, and the daily ritual of raising the American flag. The flagpole circle was located between Barracks #1, #2 and #5. This feature is a circular depression in the ground with three steps each on the north and south quadrant of the circle. There is a north/south and east/west axis (fig. 5.3) with lilacs bordering most of the circle. Stones are embedded within the earth on the inside edge of the circle and placed at random intervals retaining the dirt. There was a drinking fountain in the lilac circle; two pipes are visible within the circle but the fountain is missing.

The circular stone fountain located between the former Headquarters Building and Barracks #5 is well maintained but non-functional. The fountain is made from rock and mortar similar to other fountains from the era of the conservation corps; they exhibited the skill of the CCC men while creating esthetic value and a focal point of the camp. There is a reference to a fishpond in the map from 1937; this can be distinguished in the aerial images from 1948 and 1955 but is not currently in existence on the site (figs. 5.2-5.5).

The earthen amphitheater or a sloping semicircular seating area, is located between Barracks #4 and #5 is approximately 84'-0" x 20'-0" wide and heavily overgrown with vegetation. There is supporting evidence that this was built during the CCC era from the aerial photograph of 1937 and may have been where the men gathered for assembly. Behind Barracks #5 and at the head of the amphitheater are two flat stones or platforms embedded in the earth measuring 4'-0" x 3'-0" and 3'-5" x 2'-0". These could have been used as standing platforms for addressing the assembly.

A few retaining walls made of rock and mortar located around the site date to the time of the CCC Camp: behind Barracks #2; 60' - 0" x 3' - 0" x 1' - 0", along the south edge of Barracks #1; 97' - 8" x 2' - 6", and in front of the Recreation Hall; 95' - 8" x 2' - 0" x 4' - 0". These features are clear in the 1948 aerial image but not as apparent in the 1937 aerial image, which is of poor quality. The terracing pertaining to the retaining walls is mentioned in the 1988 National Register of Historic Places as being completed in 1936 for slope stabilization.

The natural features surrounding the camp still provide the same experience and setting for the camp. The north side of the camp is rimmed by Bear Creek and the drainage along the southwestern end of the camp still flows and is surrounded by native deciduous and evergreen plants. A large red sandstone outcrop similar to the monoliths in Red Rocks Park still exists

outside the camp's southern boundary, and the northern portion of Red Rocks Park is visible just as it was during the 1930s. The surrounding hillside offers a sense of enclosure, and the new growth of trees and other plants reflect how the landscape evolves over time.

Water

Bear Creek rims Mount Morrison CCC Camp along the northern edge of the camp. There were two major floods along Bear Creek during the 1930s, one in 1933 and another in 1938. After the 1933 flood, a stone retaining wall along Bear Creek was proposed by the Mountain Parks Department. In a document from Mountain Improvements and Parks dated September 7, 1934, the proposed projects for the park were described including, "building a bridge across Bear Creek in Morrison Park...Building for flood protection purposes a stone wall 400' x 4' high to protect Mountain Parks Department garage."⁶ The work was underway in 1935 according to the following excerpt from an article written March 31, 1935, by John Polly. He describes a road trip he took with Walt Ailinger, the superintendent of Denver Mountain Parks:

Nearing Morrison...from the high red rock shelf you look down to Bear Creek. Floods of recent years are only a bad dream...Stonewalls are being built along the channel of the creek. They will form the foundation for an automobile bridge, which will give access to the beautiful little park across the water. A short distance down the creek foundations for a suspension footbridge are in place.⁷

The building of the stone walls along Bear Creek, the footbridge and the trout ponds were underway before the camp was built and occupied by Company 1848 in the summer of 1935.

The town of Morrison's water plant was on site prior to the development of the camp. A plan dated 1937 called Denver Mountain Parks Pipe Line (located at camp SP-13) shows a pipeline built from the existing Morrison water line to the Garage and Facilitating Building or current park offices, extending water to the buildings. Water for the rest of the camp was drawn through a pipeline from Bear Creek; a water source close to the camp was one of the main reasons this site was chosen for the camp.⁸

⁶ L. G. Trueheart, Application for Approval of Work Project. Manager of Improvements of Parks, Denver, 1934.

⁷ John Polly, "Denver Mountain Parks are a Treat," *Rocky Mountain News*, Denver, March 1, 1935.

⁸ United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, State Park Division: *Camp Application*, 1934.

History: The New Deal

On the eve of 1933, the nation was in its third year of the Great Depression. There was vast unemployment, growing poverty, the nation's forests were deteriorating because of deforestation, and the soil of many farms was depleted and eroded from poor cultivation practices.⁹ Nearly one in every four Americans was out of work, with the unemployment rate continuing to rise. The depression, coupled with severe droughts and winds that created the Dust Bowl, caused many people to leave their homes in search of work and food. Newly elected president Franklin Delano Roosevelt worked with Congress to enact more legislation than in any previous time in America's history. One outcome of these bills was the creation of the Emergency Conservation Work (ECW) program through legislation signed on March 31, 1933.¹⁰ This program was continued through the Congressional Act of June 1937, which officially changed the name to Civilian Conservation Corps.¹¹ This was one of the many government programs to provide work for the unemployed during the Great Depression.

The Civilian Conservation Corps was terminated in 1942, shortly after the outbreak of World War II, but is considered to be one of the most successful New Deal programs initiated by the Roosevelt administration. The enrollees were young men ages eighteen through twenty-five who were United States citizens and passed a physical exam. Enrollment expanded to include veterans of World War I, who also experienced high unemployment. Local Experienced Men (LEM) were hired from the community in order to teach skills to the inexperienced enrollees and work on higher levels of projects. Men were organized in companies, a military term for a group of soldiers. These companies were assigned to different CCC camps at various times. Several governmental agencies were involved with the activities of the CCC including the Departments of War, Agriculture, Interior, and Labor, with each performing separate tasks within the program. The Department of War was responsible for physical conditioning, transportation, camp construction, administration of the camps and supplies.¹² The Army was in charge of the construction of the camps for as many as two hundred men.

⁹ Alfred Emile Cornebise, *The CCC Chronicles*, (Jefferson, N.C.: MacFarland and Company, Inc. 2004).

¹⁰ 48 Stat.22, Public Law 73-5. A later popular name for the 1933 act was the Civilian Conservation Corps Reforestation Relief Act.

¹¹ Colorado State Archives: Civilian Conservation Corps Collection. "The Civilian Conservation Corps in Colorado," <http://www.colorado.gov/dpa/doit/archives/ccc/cccscope.html> (accessed January 30, 2012).

¹² Forest Service. *The Forest Service and The Civilian Conservation Corps: 1933-42*, by Alison T. Otis, Thomas C. Hogg, and Kimberly K. Lakin, 1986.

They had standard directions for designs, types of materials, dimensions, and detailed step-by-step procedures for the building of the camps. The vernacular style of the camps was utilitarian, modeled after army barracks of the day.

The Departments of the Interior and Agriculture designated the campsites and planned and supervised the camp projects. The scope of work for the men was extensive, with the Department of Agriculture focusing on forest and land restoration and the Department of the Interior aimed at the protection and conservation of the scenic, historic, archaeological, and geological resources of the national parks and monuments and also state and municipal parks. Much of the work in Colorado was aimed at forest conservation projects because of bad management practices and an overtaxed Forest Service.¹³ The Civilian Conservation Corps in Colorado began in the summer of 1933 with twenty-nine camps gradually increasing to forty-seven camps at the height of its enrollment.¹⁴ Out of these camps, one is still remaining and it is one of the best examples of a Civilian Conservation Corps camp in the United States, Camp SP-13-C Mount Morrison.

Denver Mountain Parks

Denver Mountain Parks was a system of mountain parks accessible by scenic highways. In 1928 the City and County of Denver under Mayor Robert W. Speer acquired Red Rocks as part of the mountain parks system. The park was known for its spectacular rock formations and rustic natural outdoor amphitheater, but some people wanted to develop it into a formal outdoor theater. However, in the depression there was little money for public works projects. George Cranmer, the Manager of Parks and Improvements appointed by Mayor Benjamin Stapleton in 1935, looked to the newly organized work relief programs as a way to construct several projects for Denver Mountain Parks Division during the depression. The Civilian Conservation Corps undertook the greatest of these projects, the building of Red Rocks Park and Amphitheatre from 1936 to 1941.

Camp SP-13-C

Over time the Mount Morrison camp had two camp designations: SP-13-C and later MA-1. Two companies were assigned to the camp: 1848 and 1860.

¹³ “By 1933 Colorado forest had been reduced by millions of acres through destruction of fire, by misuse through bad logging practices and by conversion of forests to agricultural land.” L.A. Gleyre and C. N. Alleger, *History of the Civilian Conservation Corps in Colorado Summer 1936*, (Denver: Press of the Western Newspaper Union, n.d.), 80.

¹⁴ Alfred Emile Cornebise, *The CCC Chronicles*, (Jefferson, N.C.: MacFarland and Company, Inc. 2004).

Company 1848 occupied the Mount Morrison Colorado CCC Camp on June 30th 1935. The enrollment of Company 1848 was local with 95% being from Colorado.¹⁵ The main reason for the move to Morrison was to provide the labor necessary for the building of the Red Rocks Amphitheatre.¹⁶ Company 1848 was kept busy building picnic tables, parking areas, roads, bridges, ovens, and trails while the plans for the amphitheater were waiting for approval.¹⁷ Other projects were erosion control and bank sloping. Nearly a year after their arrival, in May of 1936, all that work was suspended for Company 1848 in order to begin working on the construction of the amphitheater, one of the largest projects of this kind undertaken by the CCC. Company 1860 moved into Mount Morrison Camp SP-13-C on May 15, 1937 and worked solely on Red Rocks Amphitheatre.¹⁸ Company 1860 was a veterans' company, made up of older men with more experience. They preferred working on the amphitheater because training and skill were essential and as a project, was much more to their liking.¹⁹ The men of the Mount Morrison Civilian Conservation Corps Camp worked on one of the largest projects in the nation during that time, requiring a high level of craftsmanship and construction that is exemplified in the Red Rocks Amphitheatre.

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¹⁵ Ibid. 79.

¹⁶ Ibid. 80.

¹⁷ Ibid. 80.

¹⁸ Supplementary Report Camp SP-13, Company 1860 by J.C. Reddoch, Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps, Division of Investigations, Camp Inspection Reports, 1933-1942, National Archives; Maryland.

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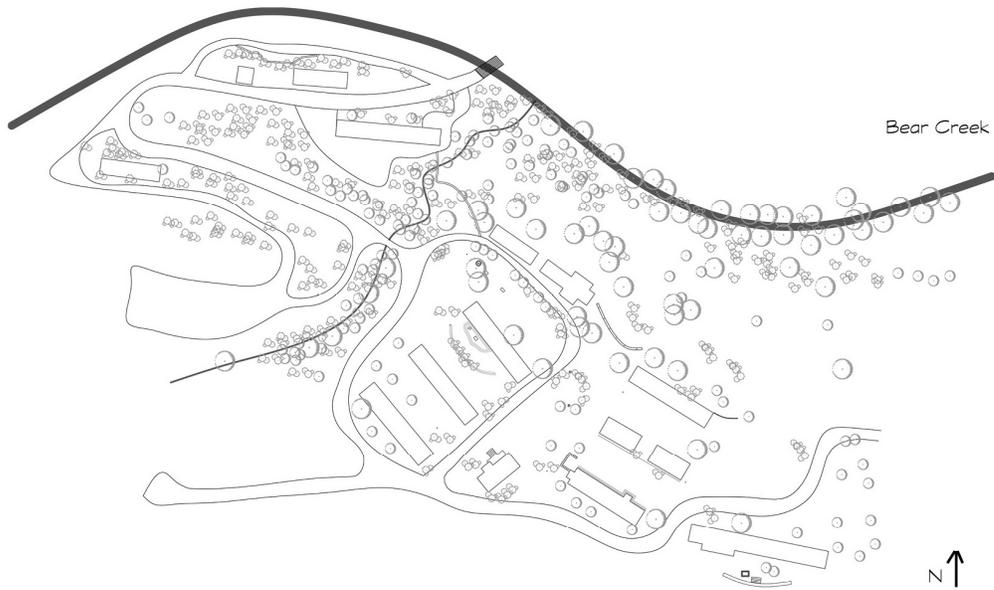
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April 27, 2012

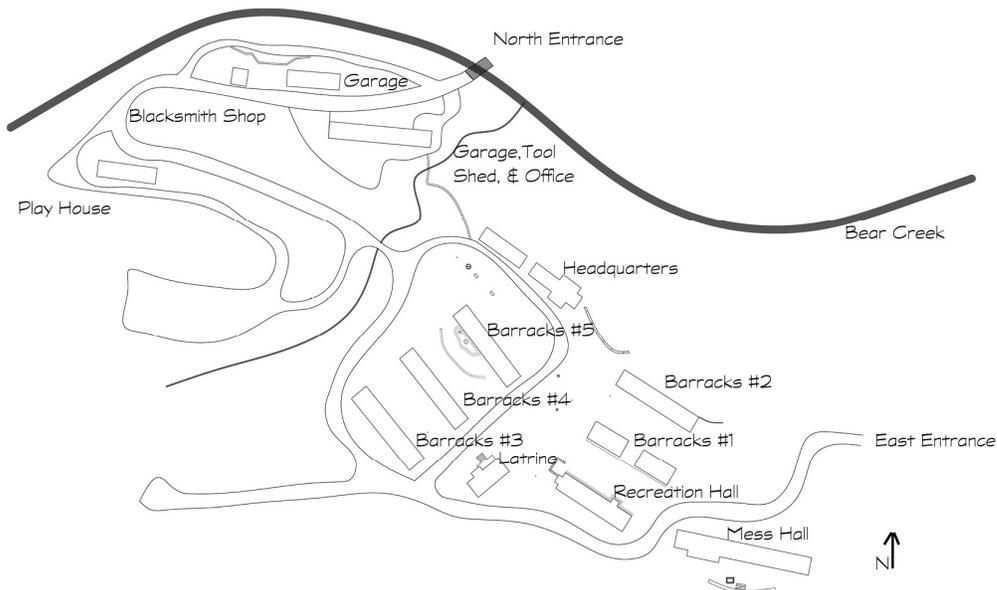


Satellite image of Mount Morrison CCC Camp, 2010, Courtesy of Denver Parks & Recreation Dept., GIS, and Denver Regional Council of Governments.



Mount Morrison Civilian Conservation Corps Camp 2011

Site plan of Mount Morrison CCC Camp. (Kelly Halpin, September 10, 2011).



Mount Morrison Civilian Conservation Corps Camp

Site Plan of Mount Morrison CCC Camp showing building name and placement, location, entrances, road and Bear Creek. (Kelly Halpin, September 10, 2011).



Barracks #2 with a view of the sandstone formations of Red Rocks Park in the background. (Kelly Halpin, October 7, 2011).



The stone fountain in the area between Barracks #5 and the Headquarters building. (Kelly Halpin, September 10, 2011).

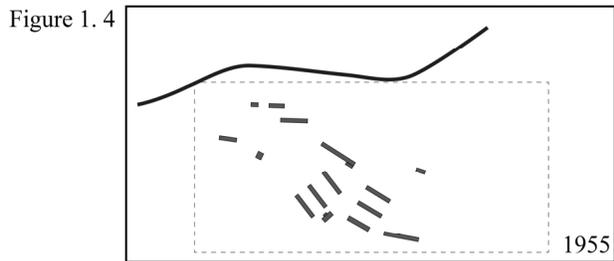
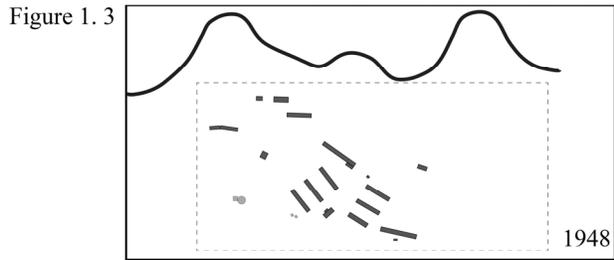
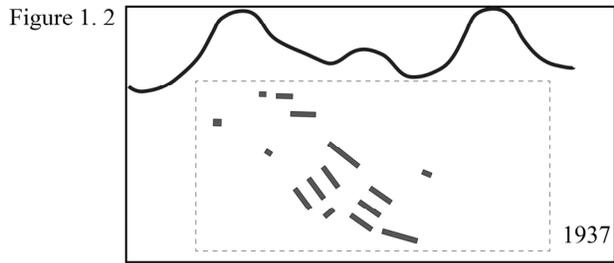
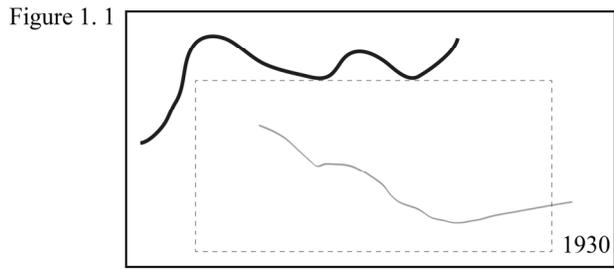


Figure 1. Building Footprints 1930-2010. (Kelly Halpin, October 15, 2011).

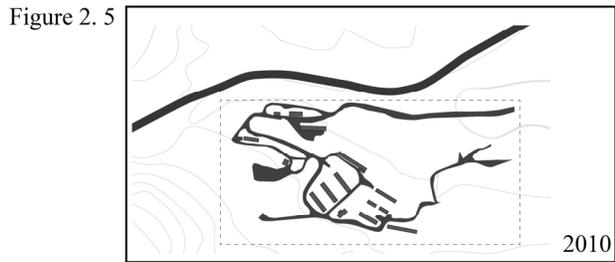
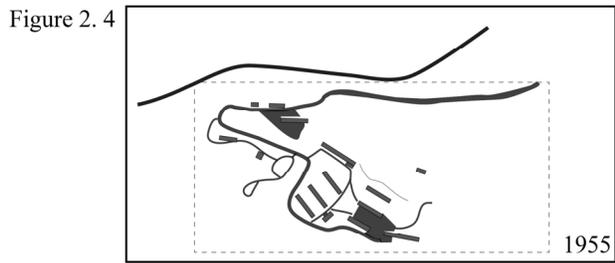
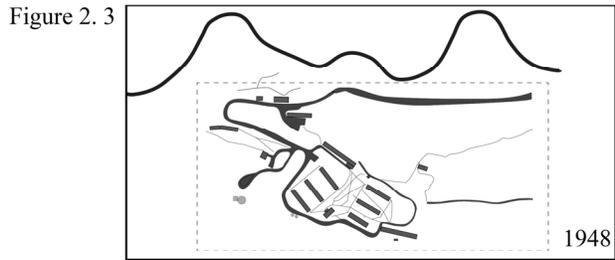
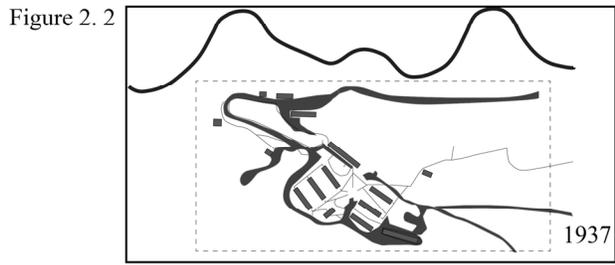
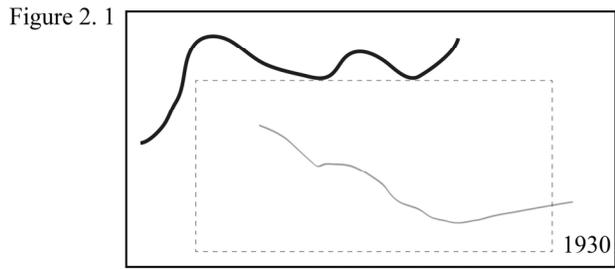


Figure 2. Roads and Trails 1930-2010. (Kelly Halpin, October 15, 2011).

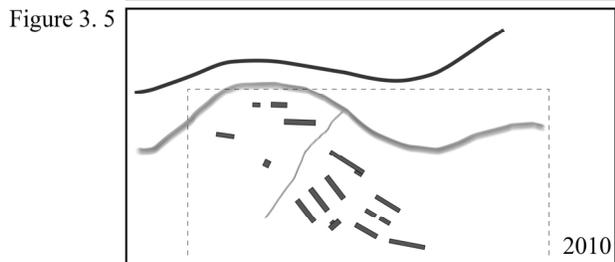
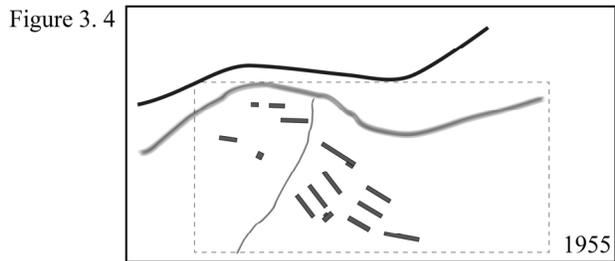
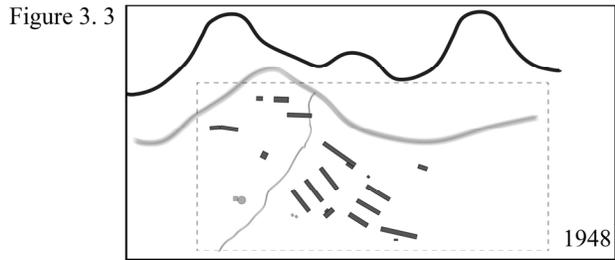
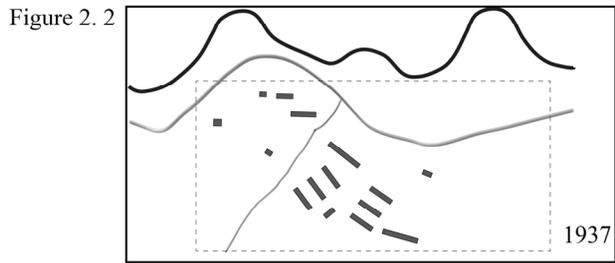
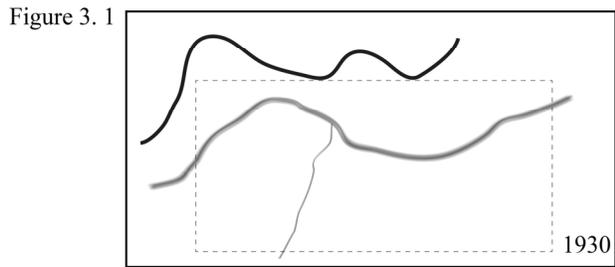


Figure 2. River 1930-2010. (Kelly Halpin, October 15, 2011).

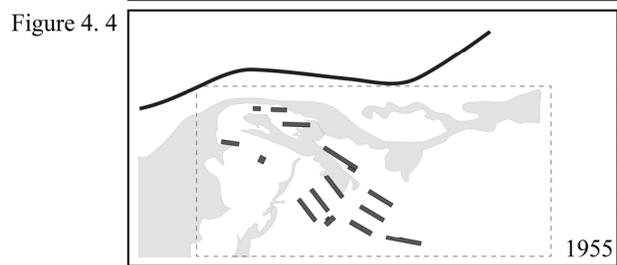
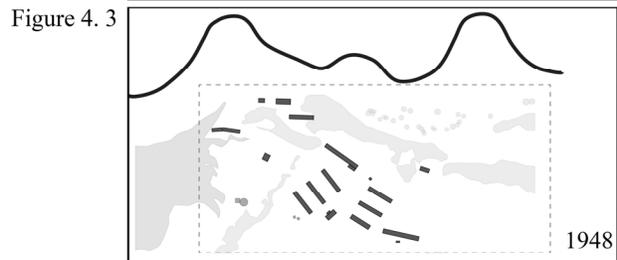
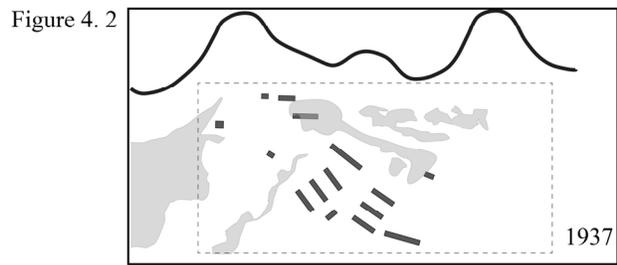
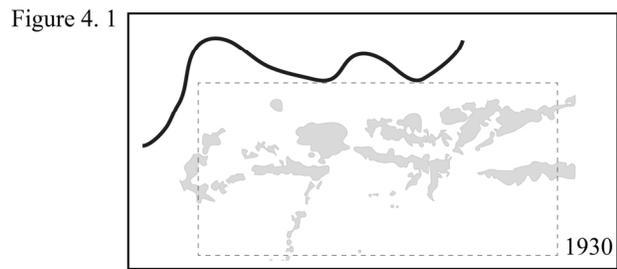


Figure 4. Vegetation 1930-2010. (Kelly Halpin, October 15, 2011).

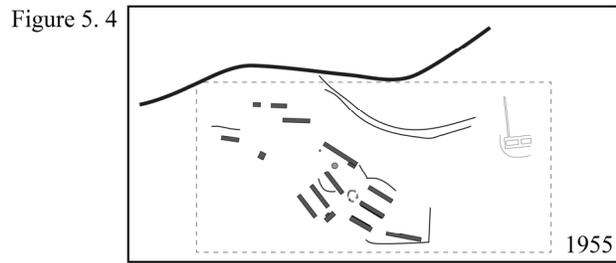
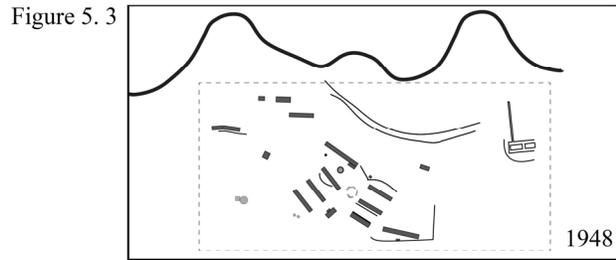
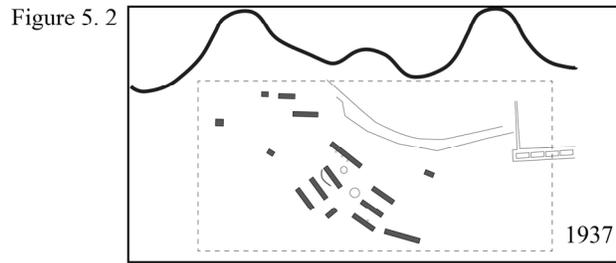
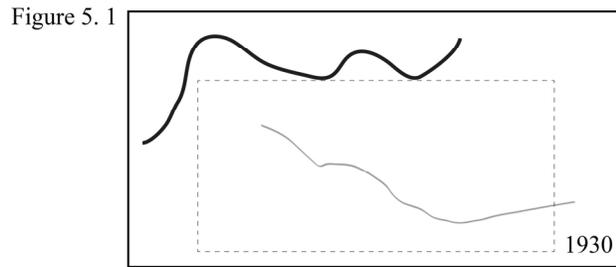


Figure 5. Landscape Features 1930-2010. (Kelly Halpin, October 15, 2011).

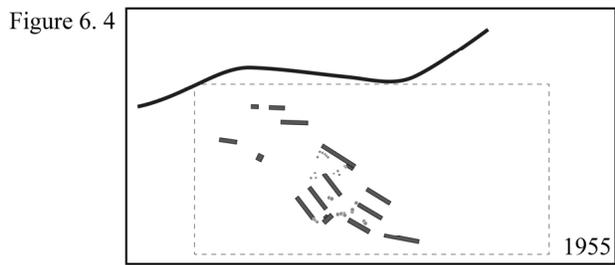
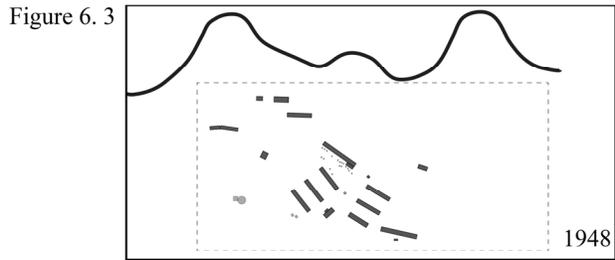
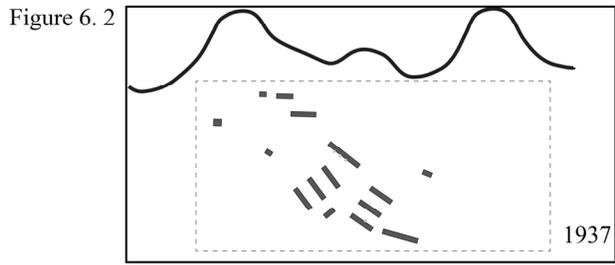
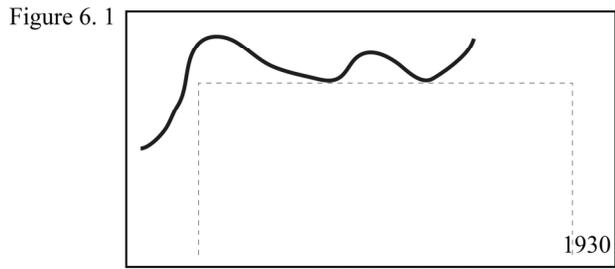


Figure 6. Trees 1930-2010. (Kelly Halpin, October 15, 2011).