

Rabideau Civilian Conservation Corps Camp,
Education Building (Building No. 4)
County Road 39
Blackduck Vicinity
Beltrami County
Minnesota

HABS No. MN-147-C

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4-BLADU.V,
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Denver, Colorado 80225-0287

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

RABIDEAU CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS CAMP,
EDUCATION BUILDING
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Location: One-half mile west of Beltrami County Highway 39, six miles south of Blackduck, Beltrami County, Minnesota.

Significance: The Education Building was constructed in 1935 as part of the Rabideau Civilian Conservation Corps Camp, which operated on the Chippewa National Forest until 1941. The camp was later used by the University of Illinois as a summer field school from 1946 to 1972. With its hillside siting and rather unusual size for a building associated with a CCC camp, the Education Building is the most imposing structure at the Rabideau Camp.

Description: Resting on a log-post foundation, the Education Building is a large U-shaped structure sheathed in shiplap siding painted dark green. Measuring 75' east-west x 20' north-south, the central main block stands on the crest of a hill, while the two wings project south along the slope. The west wing is 40' in length and 20' in width; the east wing is 20' square. All three sections of the building have low-pitch, trussed, gable roofs covered with green rolled asphalt. Roof surfaces are currently protected against water infiltration by plastic sheeting. All exterior trim consists of plain wood planks painted white.

Sheltered by a small gabled canopy, the building's principal entrance is at the south end of the main block's east facade. To the north of the entrance are two boarded window openings. An additional window, with six-lite casement sash, is in the gable end. The main block's west end wall has a similar gable-end window, positioned above a central entrance flanked by single, nine-light casement windows. Steps that once served this entrance have been removed. Nine-light casement windows are evenly spaced on the north facade.

The west wing features four windows on the west wall, two windows on the south wall, and four windows with a central entrance (missing its steps) on the east wall. The east wing displays four windows on the west facade, two windows on the south facade, and two windows, along with a north-end entrance, on the east facade. The various window openings are equipped with either six-light or nine-light casements.

The building's principal entrance leads into a short hallway, with a library (in the east wing) on the left and an apparent office on the right. Directly ahead is a large classroom with numerous wooden tables and benches. The south wall of the classroom contains a doorway into the west wing. Interior surfaces include pine paneling in the office, plywood paneling in the large classroom, and horizontal wood wainscoting, with fiberboard above, in the west wing. Ceilings in the main block and library are plywood, with a tent-like appearance created by panels angled toward each side wall.

The building is currently experiencing a number of structural problems, the most notable of which is the apparent failure of the foundation along the west facade of the west wing. The Forest Service has installed cribbing beneath the wing in order to prevent collapse.

History: When the Rabideau Camp was first constructed, the Education Building only consisted of its rectangular base, with the same dimensions as the standard barracks at the camp. Since it was described as a barracks on the oldest known site plan, it is possible the building may have initially served that purpose, but it is known to have served as the camp's Education Building beginning in 1936. The CCC later added the two wings to the building, probably sometime in 1936, which is apparently indicative of the increasingly important role that education played at the camp. The expanded building included classroom space, a library, and a workshop. Educational and training classes were conducted by the camp's Educational Advisor. Enrollees studied a variety of classes such as English, public speaking, mathematics, and typing. Those who had not completed high school received instruction which enabled them to qualify for a general education diploma (GED). Evening classes were taught by camp supervisory personnel and visiting instructors on a voluntary basis. Courses pertained to the camp's current projects, timber stand improvement, carpentry, woodworking, welding, and auto mechanics. Wildlife conservation was also taught and there were generally between 30 and 50 enrollees who were members of the National Audubon Society. The camp newsletter, "Pine Knots", was printed in the Education Building.

When the University of Illinois first utilized the camp, the Education Building continued to provide classroom space. The large tables and benches found in the classroom were probably built by the University about 1947. In time, the use shifted to recreation. Films were shown in the classroom and by 1950, a canteen was installed in the west wing, which had been the workshop. It is also evident that the principal entrance, situated in the east end wall, was once centrally located before its location was exchanged with the adjacent window opening. Wood infill clearly marks the location of the original doorway. This change probably occurred in 1936, based on a description of the building by Clair T. Rollings, the camp's Educational Advisor. Rollings also noted that the slate for the walkway came from old pool tables.

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Sources: The oldest known site plan of the camp while still occupied by the CCC, entitled "Rabideau Camp F-50" (ca. 1936); a site plan by the University of Illinois entitled "Camp Rabideau," dated August 1947; a drawing by the University of Illinois entitled "Classroom Building," which includes a detail of a standard table and bench, dated April 6, 1947; all located at the University Archives, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, in the Civil Engineering Subject File Record Series 11/5/1. An unpublished history of the Rabideau Camp entitled

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"History of Company 708 Civilian Conservation Corps" by Clair T. Rollings, the camp's educational advisor, dated March 15, 1977, in a file on the Rabideau Camp located at the Forest Supervisor's Office in Cass Lake, Minnesota. See also HABS No. MN-147.

Historian: Rolf T. Anderson, 1994