

## **History of the North Carolina State Park System - Part 3: Expansion through Public Donations and Federal Public Works Programs, 1934-1941** <sup>[1]</sup>

### **History of the North Carolina State Park System - Part 3: Expansion through Public Donations and Federal Public Works Programs, 1934-1941**

by Alan Eakes, Lewis Ledford, and Don Reuter, 2011.

[NC Division of Parks of Recreation](#) <sup>[2]</sup>, NC Department of Cultural Environment & Natural Resources.

Reprinted with permission from Beanblossom, Robert. ed. 2011. *Histories of southeastern state park systems* Association of Southeastern State Park Directors.

Part 1: [Introduction](#) <sup>[3]</sup>; Part 2: [Birth of a State Park System, 1891-1933](#) <sup>[4]</sup>; Part 3: Expansion through Public Donations and Federal Public Works Programs, 1934-1941; Part 4: [WWII and Post WWII Developments](#) <sup>[5]</sup>; Part 5: [Growth through Donations and LWCF Assistance, 1956-1970](#) <sup>[6]</sup>; Part 6: [Program and Park Expansion, 1971-1979](#) <sup>[7]</sup>; Part 7: [Reservoirs, Re-evaluations and New Initiatives, 1980-1989](#) <sup>[8]</sup>; Part 8: [Financial Resources Committed to State Parks, 1990-1999](#) <sup>[9]</sup>; Part 9: [Planning for the Future and Growing Parks and Conservation in a Rapidly Growing State, 2000-2011](#) <sup>[10]</sup>

In response to the Great Depression, the Roosevelt administration placed millions of dollars into public works programs. These federal programs created nine state parks in North Carolina.

In the spring of 1933, the [Civilian Conservation Corps](#) <sup>[11]</sup> (CCC) came to North Carolina. The first CCC camp was located at Fort Macon in 1934. Here they built a hard surface road and started reconstruction of the fort.

In 1935, a portion of the oldest mountain range in America – Morrow Mountain – was given to the state by J.M. Morrow. Citizens of Stanly County followed this donation by issuing \$20,000 in bonds for the purchase of parkland. Between 1937 and 1942 the CCC built roads, an office, maintenance buildings, a bathhouse and swimming pool.

Hanging Rock State Park, a series of scenic ridges and knobs made of erosion resistant quartzite, was created with the donation of 3,000 acres from citizens of Winston-Salem and Stokes County. In July 1935, the CCC impounded a 12-acre lake and built a bathhouse, picnic grounds and other facilities.

Cape Hatteras State Park, acquired by gift in 1935, was adjacent to the Cape Hatteras lighthouse. That same year the CCC repaired the lighthouse and did other work such as dune and beach erosion control. The area became part of the [Cape Hatteras National Seashore Recreation Area](#) <sup>[12]</sup> in 1952.

Between 1936 and 1941, the CCC developed facilities at Mount Mitchell. One of the major accomplishments of more than 100 workers was the construction of a wooden concession stand and restroom complex just below the summit.

The larger parks system created by these federal programs saw the establishment of the Branch of State Parks within the Division of Forestry in 1935. Thomas W. Morse became the first full-time Superintendent of State Parks.

#### **Demonstration Parks**

In 1936, with local materials and talents, the Resettlement Administration constructed day-use facilities at Jones Lake. The park opened under a lease on July 1, 1939 as the first state park for African-Americans. In later years, the park became fully integrated. In October 1954, the land was given to the state by the federal government. Jones Lake State Park includes two Carolina bays, Jones and Salters Lakes.

In 1936, the [National Park Service](#) <sup>[13]</sup> began two recreational demonstration projects in the state, Crabtree Creek and Singletary Lake. The objective of the program was to convert sub-marginal farmland to such uses as recreation, education and the conservation of natural resources.

In 1934, federal and state agencies bought 5,000 acres to develop Crabtree Creek. The CCC built four organized group camps and day-use facilities. Crabtree Creek State Park opened in 1937 and was sold to the state for \$1 in 1943. In 1950, 1,234 acres of the park was designated for use by black citizens and named Reedy Creek State Park. The name of the Crabtree Creek Section was changed to William B. Umstead State Park in 1955 in honor of the former governor. In 1966, both parks were united under the same name and opened to all people. Today, the park is a wilderness oasis surrounded by one of the state's largest metropolitan populations.


The history of the group camps at Singletary Lake is similar to that of Umstead. From 1936 to 1939, resettlement workers and local residents constructed the Singletary Recreation Center on sub-marginal farmland. In 1939, the park was leased from the federal government and in October of 1954, the land was deeded to the state.

In 1939, Pettigrew State Park was established to provide recreational use of Lake Phelps, the second largest natural lake

in the state, and to preserve the historic plantations of Bonarva and Somerset. The Works Project Administration <sup>[14]</sup> began restoration of Somerset Plantation <sup>[15]</sup>, which was transferred to the Department of Archives and History in 1965. Bonarva, the home place of Gen. James Johnston Pettigrew <sup>[16]</sup>, the Civil War hero for whom the park is named is adjacent to Somerset Place <sup>[15]</sup>.

## Park, Parkway and Recreation Area Study

In 1940, the Park, Parkway and Recreation Area Study outlined the first comprehensive plan for the state park system. Unfortunately, this plan and the federally-funded projects in the state took a back seat to the main event of 1941-the outbreak of World War II.

Keep reading > Part 4:WWII and Post WWII Developments <sup>[5]</sup>  <sup>[17]</sup>

## References:

Beanblossom, Robert. ed. 2011. *Histories of southeastern state park systems* Association of Southeastern State Park Directors.

## Additional resources:

NC Division of Parks and Recreation, NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources. <https://www.ncparks.gov/> <sup>[2]</sup>

NC Division of Parks and Recreation. "Annual Report of the North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation." NC Digital Collections: <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/documents?search=163578861&searchtypes=Metadata|Full%20text&applyState=true> <sup>[18]</sup>

## Subjects:

Government agencies <sup>[19]</sup>

Parks <sup>[20]</sup>

## Authors:

Eakes, Alan <sup>[21]</sup>

Ledford, Lewis <sup>[22]</sup>

Reuter, Don <sup>[23]</sup>

## From:

NC Division of Parks and Recreation, NC Dept. of Natural and Cultural Resources <sup>[24]</sup>

1 January 2011 | Eakes, Alan; Ledford, Lewis; Reuter, Don

---

**Source URL:** <https://www.ncpedia.org/history-north-carolina-state-park-3>

## Links

[1] <https://www.ncpedia.org/history-north-carolina-state-park-3> [2] <https://www.ncparks.gov/> [3] <https://www.ncpedia.org/history-north-carolina-state-park-1> [4] <https://www.ncpedia.org/history-north-carolina-state-park-2> [5] <https://www.ncpedia.org/history-north-carolina-state-park-4> [6] <https://www.ncpedia.org/history-north-carolina-state-park-5> [7] <https://www.ncpedia.org/history-north-carolina-state-park> [8] <https://www.ncpedia.org/history-north-carolina-state-park-6> [9] <https://www.ncpedia.org/history-north-carolina-state-park-7> [10] <https://www.ncpedia.org/history-north-carolina-state-park-0> [11] <https://www.ncpedia.org/history/20th-Century/ccc> [12] <https://www.ncpedia.org/cape-hatteras-national-seashore> [13] <https://www.nps.gov/index.htm> [14] <https://www.ncpedia.org/history/20th-Century/wpa> [15] <https://www.ncpedia.org/somerset-place> [16] <https://www.ncpedia.org/biography/pettigrew-james-johnston> [17] <https://www.ncpedia.org/history-north-carolina-state-park-4> [18] <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/documents?search=163578861&searchtypes=Metadata|Full%20text&applyState=true> [19] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/go> [20] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/subjects/parks> [21] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/authors/eakes-alan> [22] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/authors/ledford-lewis> [23] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/authors/reuter-don> [24] <https://www.ncpedia.org/category/entry-source/nc-division>