

A FEW UNCLASSIFIED FACTS

The total contribution of the Roebling family, for the purchase of the land and the construction of access and protection facilities, was in the neighborhood of \$ 400,000. Included in this figure was \$ 15,000 for the tree surgery on the three giant oaks. No records are available giving the subscriptions of local people and others but a realistic estimate would be around \$ 25,000.

For many years, the Florida Park Service included a group of prominent (non-paid) public figures representing sections of the state. These members were not selected because of their park experience but rather for their influence. At one time, one very powerful member of this board, who gauged the value of any park by the number of visitors or the size of revenue, recommended that a swimming pool be added to the attractions of the Hammock. If his proposal had been followed, the run of Tiger branch would have been dammed to form an “old fashioned swimmin’ hole” or a formal pool would have been built in the Vesper parking area.

One of the projects of the CCC was the construction of a greenhouse for the propagation of plant materials. With the abandoning of the Botanical Garden plans, a building for this purpose was of no value but the Hammock personnel have converted it into a carpenter shop and small equipment maintenance building. For these purposes, it is practically ideal.

In 1976, the Division of Recreation and Parks constructed a most attractive exhibit which depicted the operations of the CCC. On June 6, 1976, this display was placed in a building in the recreation area and was dedicated in a very enjoyable ceremony during which Director Landrum spoke on “Florida’s State Parks and the Nation’s Bicentennial.” He also presented a scroll which designated the Hammock as a salient point on Florida’s Bicentennial Trail as one of the state’s outstanding features.

The event was also the convocation of the alumni of CCC enrollees and supervisors with CCC veterans coming from all sections of the state, even from the far-away pan handle. Some of them related their unique experiences while in the C’s.

The theme of the day was expressed in this excerpt from the printed program:- “The Bicentennial Exhibit at Highlands Hammock State Park recognizes the lasting accomplishments of the Civilian Conservation Corps in Florida and throughout the Nation, particularly its role in developing Florida’s first state parks. The original park buildings at Highlands Hammock were constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1935, and this rustic theme will be perpetuated so that the entire park will stand as a permanent example of the respected CCC tradition.”

One of the visions of the organizers of the Highlands Hammock park movement was that it would serve the education and scientific communities. This vision has proven to be far from visionary.

Over the years, many expeditions have used the Hammock as a scientific laboratory. One, from Harvard, sent teams for several successive years, to study mosquitoes. Another made an exhaustive examination into the study of mushrooms. More recently, the organized scientific studies have included fireflies and wasps. The Hammock is rich in source materials for these and many other subjects.

Classes from elementary schools, high schools and colleges are frequent study groups. One example of the latter is the annual visit of a class in park administration of the Junior College of Lake City, Florida.

While other interests have waxed and waned over the years, Highlands Hammock has never ceased to be the number one source of pride and satisfaction in the hearts of the communities of Sebring and Highlands County. From the earliest days, when it was known as Hooker Hammock or Eilands Hammock, and when it was a full day’s trip to go and come in a horse-drawn surrey, the newcomer to town has been shown the beauties of the Hammock immediately upon his arrival and invariably he has been enchanted. And, its allure has continued to increase with the years.