

RESUME OF HIGHLANDS HAMMOCK HISTORY
(WITH BOTANICAL GARDEN AND ARBORETUM DEVELOPMENTS)
FOR PRESENTATION AT MEETING WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF
EMERGENCY CONSERVATION WORK AND NATIONAL PARK SERVICE OFFICIALS

By Alexander Blair March 30, 1936.

In this brief resume of the Hammock history no attempt is made to do justice to all that has transpired or to mention by name those who have done so much, in various ways, for the Hammock before it reached the present stage of its development.

About six years ago a small group of men from Avon Park and Sebring organized the Tropical Florida Parks Association with the purpose of acquiring "Hooker Hammock" (as it was then called) which was privately owned, and of preserving it as a natural forest for the benefit of the public. By a curious coincidence Mrs. Margaret Shippen Roebing (Mrs. John A. Roebing) was taking the only airplane trip she had ever made, with her son Mr. Donald Roebing, and saw the luxuriant vegetation of the Hammock, while flying above it, en route to Sebring, and at that time, conceived the idea that the Hammock should be conserved, without knowledge of what already had been started. When invited by the Tropical Florida Parks Association, which was then soliciting funds, to become one of the subscribers she was, therefore, quite ready to cooperate and offered a donation which was adequate to purchase the greater part of the land (some of the lands being offered as a gift by their owners). This enabled the other subscriptions raised, amounting to nearly \$ 10,000.00, to be used during the first two years for the expenses of a curator and a small maintenance force.

Owing to the financial stress existing it was soon obvious that the Trustees of the Tropical Florida Parks Association could not raise sufficient funds to carry out the necessary work in opening up the Hammock, nor to maintain it. At this point, Mr. and Mrs. John A. Roebing volunteered their assistance. They made funds available as required, for opening up and making accessible the important points of interest in the Hammock proper, by the construction of roads and trails. (By the Hammock proper, wherever the term is used in this report, is meant the 500 acres lying within the heart of the Hammock property, comprising typical Hammock growth). They made available funds which, in cooperation with those furnished by the County Commissioners, resulted in a paved road being constructed by the Commissioners from Lake Jackson up to the Hammock property, on the right-of-way existing (which at that time was laid out through the center of the Hammock). Recognizing that such a road, if carried straight through, would be a violation of the spirit of the Hammock it was necessary to build this on a new right-of-way around the north edge of the Hammock proper to the northwest corner of the property at the Hardee County line.

Since Mr. and Mrs. Roebling had been so greatly impressed during their trips through Florida by the havoc and destruction to vegetation wrought by forest fires they provided funds for the protection of the Hammock from outside woods fires by means of firebreaks around an area of approximately 1,300 acres (that is, 4 half sections) which was then enclosed by a wire and concrete post fence built to prevent damage due to cattle, hogs, etc. They made possible the further protection against fire and the safeguarding of the plant life by means of a water control system, which was designed to prevent damage due to erosion during storm periods, and in times of drought was to furnish a supply of water to the interior pond area that would otherwise have been dry during the winter season, infinite care being taken to avoid disturbing ground water conditions so that no plant life would be injuriously affected thereby.

This water control system included the building of a main dam in Charlie Bowlegs Creek at the north line of the Hammock and also a number of smaller secondary dams in the tributary drainage ditch, to break the continuity of flow in order to prevent erosion of the bottom and banks of the ditches. It also necessitated piping a stream of water into the Hammock proper from a constantly flowing stream in the higher lands to the east (now in Botanical Garden and Arboretum property) sufficient to allow for normal evaporation loss from the ponds in the dry season. In all of this water control work there has been a limited amount of money available, necessitating great economy and even severity in design in such features as secondary dams and pipe lines. Limited funds also governed the work which was done on the County Road which it is now recognized should, in certain areas, ultimately be vacated and rerouted completely around the property so as to cut off through-traffic, which may be detrimental to the best interests of such a natural forest park. All work in the Hammock was done with a limited number of men over a period of about five years, serving as a project that would assist the County and the State in dealing with the unemployment problems, but without financial aid from any governmental sources.

All construction work in the Hammock was done with a view to disturbing as little as possible the natural wild beauty of the plant life; man-made improvements were introduced only where essential and with a view to harmonizing with their natural surroundings. The principle was established by members of the Roebling family that nothing exotic should be introduced into the Hammock proper (which was complete in itself) also that no structure be erected within it which would conflict with its natural beauty, and that the Hammock remain always as a preserve for wild animal life.

Believing that the name "Hooker Hammock" did not carry a true significance, the Trustees, after the death of Mrs. Margaret Shippen Roebling and desiring to comply with her wishes that the Hammock be renamed "Highlands" reorganized in February,

1932, under the name of Highlands Hammock, Inc. Some months after Mrs. Roebling died the Trustees on March 15, 1931, held a service dedicating Highlands Hammock to the public. A bronze tablet was placed by the Trustees on a rock which now stands under one of the finest oak trees, as a fitting tribute to her memory. This tree was one of the three trees restored by tree surgery by Mr. Donald Roebling in memory of his mother.

During the carrying out of this program of gradual development the State Forester, after several visits, became keenly interested and conceived the idea that Highlands Hammock could fittingly be made the nucleus of a State Park. Believing that a State Park might properly incorporate other features than those found in the Hammock, the State Forester, with others, created enthusiasm in the formation of a Botanical Garden and Arboretum Association, and aroused the interest of the Florida Federation of Garden Clubs to sponsor such a project in property adjacent to and closely tying in to Highlands Hammock. This Botanical Garden and Arboretum Association was organized in April, 1934, chiefly under the direction of certain members of the Florida Federation of Garden Clubs and by certain Trustees of Highlands Hammock, Inc., with technical cooperation from noted botanists, landscape architects and others interested.

Consultation with Mr. Frederick Law Olmsted resulted in the evolution of the idea for its development by the technical staff of the Florida Botanical Garden and Arboretum Association, and all these individuals and the groups named succeeded in securing Federal cooperation in this scheme through Emergency Conservation Work under the National Park Service.

The property selected as the nucleus of the Botanical Garden and Arboretum was then owned by Highlands Hammock, Inc., and was a section of land lying east of and adjacent to the Hammock. This was immediately deeded to the State of Florida in the name of the Trustees of the Internal Improvement Fund. By the suggestion of Mr. Olmsted and at the request of the Florida Botanical Garden and Arboretum Association, Highlands Hammock, Inc., deeded a further piece of property to the State for Botanical Garden and Arboretum purposes, consisting of a tongue shaped strip of land which at that time lay inside the fenced area of Highlands Hammock, Inc., bounded on the west by Charlie Bowlegs Creek, on the south by the new road which was known as the County Road and on the north and east by the Highlands Hammock fence. A CCC Camp began work on this Botanical Garden and Arboretum project under the direction of ECW and the State Forester in June, 1934.

During these negotiations and while work was being carried on in the Botanical Garden and Arboretum the final construction work in Highlands Hammock was completed, a total of about \$ 400,000.00 in all having been made available for purchase,

construction and maintenance by members of the Roebling family. At the annual meeting of Highlands Hammock, Inc., on February 18, 1935, Mr. Roebling's responsibility for the upkeep of Highlands Hammock was formally relinquished by him and a sum of money was given to Highlands Hammock, Inc., to be used toward the maintenance costs during the next few years, with the understanding that the Hammock would, at an early date, be taken over by the State of Florida as a State Park and that these funds would be made available to the State, to be used solely for maintenance purposes, in conjunction with moneys to be appropriated by the State Legislature also for that purpose. These trust Funds are in the hands of a group of Trustees of Highlands Hammock with the State represented by certain members of the Florida Board of Forestry. The Florida Board of Forestry, an agency of the State, accepted the deed to the property from Highlands Hammock, Inc., in July 1935, in accordance with an Act which, owing to the efforts of many interested, was unanimously passed by the State Legislature and approved on June 4, 1935.

At the request of the Florida Board of Forestry the Board of Trustees of Highlands Hammock, Inc., has been continued in existence, and in order that this Board might be more truly representative of all parts of the State the number of Trustees was increased from 25 Trustees, as originally constituted, to a total of 45, thus affording reasonable geographical representation to different parts of the State, with the purpose of widening the interest and use of the Park and securing greater support in legislative matters concerning it.

Highlands Hammock State Park is under the administration of the Florida Board of Forestry and operates under the direction of its park representative of the Board, the State Forester and the Director of the Florida Forest Service. The Trustees of Highlands Hammock, Inc., have been requested by the Florida Board of Forestry to function in an advisory capacity so as to ensure wise and proper use of the Hammock and to retain responsibility for some of its useful activities, such as the conducting of Sunday Vesper Services throughout the winter season. These Vesper Services have become widely known, largely because of the high quality of speakers who have participated in them during the past four seasons and the number of people attending these services has gradually increased.

In carrying out the original idea of the State Forester, to which reference has already been made, of creating a State Forest Park considerably greater in magnitude than either of the two projects referred to in the foregoing, it was proposed that an encircling tract of about 50,000 acres (made available chiefly by delinquency of taxes) would serve to protect both of these valuable properties. The idea of this Park was acceptable to the Florida Forest Service and it was understood that it should be known

as DeSoto State Forest Park, the property serving the public in a recreational manner. The acquisition of some of the lands in question has been completely by the consent of the owners, and with their cooperation.

It was recognized that there are problems common to all of these three projects and because of their intimate relation one to another, that the creation of an organization be contemplated which should have power to consider and administer the related interests of all three projects in cooperation with and under the direction of the Florida Board of Forestry. In the meantime steps have been taken leading to the creation of a committee which shall be representative in its character of all three, being composed of Trustees selected by each respective body, given power to deal with the problems of each. It is suggested that the control of the ECW funds and manpower might now be fittingly placed in the hands of the joint committee and that ultimately the whole park, composed of these three units, should function under one general directing organization and adopt policies which would be for the best interests of the State and of all concerned.

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REMARKS BY MRS. LINWOOD JEFFREYS
AT HIGHLANDS HAMMOCK
ON MARCH 30, 1936

It is a singular and great honor to have with us today one who know a great deal about State Parks, who knows whereof he speaks when he talks about parks, and the chairman has given me the honor to present him to you. He is the President of the National Conference on State Parks and he has done such outstanding work in the State of Indiana that, often, the parks of that state are considered a monument to his genius. It is with a great thrill that I introduce Colonel Lieber.

REMARKS BY COLONEL RICHARD LIEBER
AT HIGHLANDS HAMMOCK
ON MARCH 30, 1936

We are very happy to be here with you. We feel such a sense of relief when we come once more into this beautiful State Park.

When you enter that magnificent natural preserve of the united States, Yellowstone National Park, from the north and pass under the archway you see the inscription there in the language of those that created the preserve, which reads, "For the use and enjoyment of the people."

Now what makes the National Parks so outstanding? What makes them so imposing? What quality do they possess that other countries have come to learn from us? I remember that a late well-known international figure discussed the question with our good friend Steve Mather and got his directions how to build the big African National Park in Belgian Congo. It is a simple recipe - FIND NATURE AND LEAVE IT ALONE! Do not think that you are all going to be County Commissioners some day and must have a plaque that says, "In the year of our Lord 1936 these eminent people created something." We cannot create State Parks! We are very, very lucky to find them. So the slogan should be for us, "PRESERVE AMERICA."

When we sing about "the land of the Pilgrims' pride" if some of the pilgrims should wake up and see what we have done to the country and the devastation man has caused by fires and in other ways, they would not merely turn in their graves, they would keep revolving in the earth. But here, in Highlands Hammock, we have a perfect example of leaving nature alone, and, while this stands as a monument to Mrs. Roebing, it also should be considered that the man who has followed Mr. and Mrs. Roebing's have done here. Mr. Blair spoke about working with a limited amount of money as affecting certain structures such as county roads. Blair aren't you glad you didn't have enough money? Most people who have too much money simply work like the "nouvea riche", they want to overdo the thing. Although the amount which the Roebings put in here was anything but small, in preparation for the reception of people here, an amount of tact and judgement was shown, which, in itself, is an example to other State Park builders.

Let us remember, my friends, that parks, after all, are patriotic monuments of the highest order. I liken this place to a monument to which you can't possibly add anything but from which you could detract a good deal if you didn't use good judgement. This is one of the crown jewels of State Parks that I have seen. These parks not only remind us

of our rights as American citizens, but also of our duties to the country. If we want to look for another inscription at the gate of some place, we can take this park as well as the outstanding ones elsewhere in the country as an expression of that age-old and glorious promise which is contained in the Declaration of Independence and have the park dedicated "TO A FULLER LIFE, TO A GREATER LIBERTY, TO A VASTER PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS."

REMARKS BY MR. C. H. SCHAEFFER
AT HIGHLANDS HAMMOCK
ON MARCH 30, 1936

I came into the picture of Highlands Hammock late in its opening up, dealing with it not as a park but in the way of fire protection, in charge of 30 counties in this part of the State. Colonel Lieber, in his reference to fire devastation, didn't think much progress had been made, but if he had been here three or four years ago he couldn't have made that pleasant drive from Clewiston to Sebring without driving through smoke, but if the Colonel had seen the original condition he would have found the contrast made a great difference.

In Highlands Hammock we have the concrete example of a dream, of a vision, that Mrs. Roebling, and of the Roebling family, an idea of the Highlands Hammock Association that later was adopted by the peoples of Highlands County, DeSoto County, Hardee County, and the entire State.

The process of adopting Highlands Hammock as a State Park was not an easy matter nor was that of legally transferring it to the State. The proposal was made in the midst of the depression and, naturally, the Governor and the Florida Board of Forestry did not wish to assume an obligation they could not adequately carry, although believing the State of Florida should accept Highlands Hammock. Many, in good times, forget the poor times but we who had to deal with the problem in those days, still remember the difficulties. There were things that could have been done in regards to Highlands Hammock and other State Parks which could be secured through Federal organizations, but it is not wise to carry out much work unless the projects can be maintained afterwards. It would be a disgrace to the community, to the State, to the nation, and reflect on the C.C.C. if they did much in the way of opening up or of construction, if the money were not available for maintenance of such work after completion, so the State desired to proceed slowly but surely. This policy of ability to maintain is therefore the one that we are trying to bring out in the operation of Highlands Hammock and in the development of other State Parks.

The people of Florida and the Highlands Hammock Association still own and still have Highlands Hammock to enjoy. Because last July the Florida Board of Forestry turned over the park to the Florida park Service does not mean that your local stewardship has ended, but that the park has been adopted over the entire territory of the State and the Florida Park Service is now interested in preserving and maintaining it as the original donors would have done. In fact, Mr. Baker, when the park was accepted by the State, secured from Mr. Blair an expression of what he considered the wishes of the Roeblings and what all the people who had conceived and had participated in the venture desired, and that statement of policy was issued as a guide to each of the employees of the Highlands Hammock organization and to each person connected in any way with its operation. We have no intention of violating these principles so laid down.

Before the Hammock was turned over to the State and accepted, no legislation existed whereby the Florida Board of Forestry could accept land. At that earlier period, property had to be deeded to the Trustees of the Internal Improvement Fund. Recognizing the need, the Governor, through his committee on Conservation (of which Mrs. Jeffreys was a member) suggested to the Legislature that laws be enacted setting up the Florida Park Service and providing basic legislation to acquire, establish, and maintain parks. Excellent support was given by everybody in the State. Jack Sims from Lake Placid was the wheel-horse who got the Florida park Service legislation through the Legislature.

Many things are required in the Hammock. Colonel Lieber said it was a jewel. The Hammock itself should not be added to, there is nothing that could be done further that would add to its natural wild beauty. However there are auxiliary facilities which are needful. A crew of six men maintain this Hammock property. The C.C.C. boys have not yet worked in Highlands Hammock. Mr. Greene and his crew have kept up this whole property but because of the limited State appropriations available and the desire to conserve the Roebling maintenance funds, they have to show low expenditure.

We need a pavilion. What would have happened here today if it had rained? We should have had to get into our cars for a time at least, and if it had continued for several hours we should have had to go to Sebring and request one of the hotels to permit us to meet there. We need houses for the members of the maintenance crew. At present only one man lives on the property. In case of fire or trouble of any kind he has to send to Sebring for help. A few minutes lost in a forest fire makes a world of difference. With men living on the property it can be protected infinitely better. We also need picnic grounds for group picnics. Those now existing are suitable but inadequate and arrangements of a more permanent nature must be made. It is proposed to provide all such improvements here mentioned outside the Hammock proper.

A combination building where folks can rest and where a real museum can be started is essential. A fossil turtle was dug up about three years ago, probably a million years old, which is now only temporarily sheltered from the weather, and requires some place where it can be exhibited and where other essential features could be housed to create additional interest and attraction in an educational way. A place is needed where visitors can register, where dignified souvenirs can be sold in order to help in maintaining the park, but nothing unsuitable or unfitting to the surroundings should be considered. Anything of that character would be kept inside and not displayed as in a filling station. In the combination building, quarters for a watchman or for the person selling post cards and souvenirs could be provided. We need a small contact station, probably at the easterly entrance of the park, a place where folks can be directed to the Arboretum or to Highlands Hammock State Park.

These improvements can be secured through the C.C.C. organization. Mr. Gadsby of the National Park Service and Mr. Vinten have been highly cooperative in helping the Florida Botanical Garden and Arboretum project to get started, and it is our hope that it will be possible to work out ways and means to get those needful things for Highlands Hammock State Park through the National Park Service.

Any suggestion or criticism regarding the operation of this State Park should be freely expressed and the Park Service will do its best to comply with reasonable suggestions. You are cordially and earnestly urged to visit other Florida State Parks. I cannot close without stating that this park sets the standard which we will try to achieve in our other State Parks. The Higher Power creates this natural beauty of these parks and man merely makes them accessible and usable.

REMARKS BY MR. ROBERT FECHNER

AT HIGHLANDS HAMMOCK

ON MARCH 30, 1936

(Mr. Fechner head of the Civilian Conservation
Corps for the entire United States.)

When I was a youngster someone told me if I wished hard enough for anything I might have it sometime, and I was reminded of that today because from the first time I heard of this locality I have been most earnestly wishing and hoping that it might be my privilege some day to visit and see it, and that wish and hope have been realized here today. It has been a very pleasant surprise to me to realize that, as is not very often the case, the things that I have heard about the locality and the things that I had looked forward to seeing, when it was my privilege to visit the locality, have not been overstated

or overemphasized. I certainly doubt that it could be possible to overpraise this beautiful spot and I am delighted that it has been my privilege to come here to meet you and to see this place in which I am sure each of you take such a deep pride.

I have heard for the first time today something about the history of this Hammock, how the beauty was first called to the attention of those who were in a position to preserve it. I am reminded of the fact that only within our generation has very much progress been made along that line. We are still a young nation and up to the very recent past we were so busy building our nation, in getting established, so busy with what we had termed facetiously a few years ago “our rugged individualism” that we paid little attention to the development and the preservation of recreational areas. We were all working so hard that we didn’t realize the need for anything of this kind. I sometimes think that it must take a sever wrench to our national existence, such as we have experienced during the last five or six years, to make us understand that we were missing something that was of great value to us, something that was necessary in the development of our national life.

I think that we owe a great deal to our President who had the vision and the courage to ask Congress to strike out along new lines at a time when almost our entire citizenship were so distracted with problems, they didn’t understand why anyone would suggest the spending of Federal funds for this new organization, but Mr. Roosevelt had given long thought to this matter. It wasn’t a sudden idea on his part. He had realized during the four years that he had served as the Governor of our most populous state that there was a great problem confronting the nation because of the inability of the army of young men coming out of school or coming of working age each year and finding it impossible to secure a place in the business or industrial life of the nation.

Mr. Roosevelt had heard almost daily the reports of the tragedy of young men having to stand in idleness on street corners or wander aimlessly over the nation without any hope of improving their conditions no matter where they might travel and he had, long before he was nominated for the Presidency, resolved that if the opportunity ever came to him he was going to try to make a real effort to solve this problem, to provide healthful employment for the largest possible number of idle young men and at the same time to make it useful employment, not a charity or a dole, but something that would be of present value and of increasing value as years went by, and I think it is very significant that the first measure in the President’s national program for recovery had to do with the accomplishment of this double purpose to place at work the largest possible number of idle young men and to undertake a conservation program that had been understood for some years past but for various reasons had not been undertaken.

I am sure that the incentive that was given by our President and by the National Government has been an inspiration to all of our States, to carefully consider this problem of providing suitable recreational facilities for all their citizens, and during the past three years there has been a tremendous number of beautiful areas donated in most cases to the States by patriotic citizens who were in a position to make that contribution because of the fact that the Federal Government was making it possible for these State Parks and recreational areas to be immediately developed, or at least for the development program to immediately start so that it would no longer be said that America did not realize the importance and necessity for providing proper recreational facilities for its citizens.

Colonel Lieber mentioned Yellowstone National park and I am reminded that it is said to be the first national park created by any nation for the use and the enjoyment of its own citizens and for the citizens of other nations who might be so fortunate as to go there. I am also reminded of the story as was told when I visited that wonderful natural beauty spot that the nation owes a great debt to just a small group of men who, some seventy years ago, visited out of their own curiosity to see if the stories they had heard of that natural wonder of the world were really true and they found that it was true and there were some among that small group who followed the American tradition and immediately commenced to talk about the way they might capitalize that natural beauty spot for their own personal advantage or profit, and it was quite natural that they should look at the area from that point of view, but fortunately there were others in the group who said “no, that is not what this should be devoted to. We should preserve it for the benefit of all the people, making it free to all who may have the opportunity of coming here.” That is the way our first National Park was created because of the belief of such a few men that such a spot was intended by the Creator to be for the use and enjoyment of all of the people.

Fortunately that group has been followed by others and by individuals, and I know I will be repeating what has already been stated but I want to pay my tribute to the woman who made the preserving of this spot possible for the enjoyment of you and me and all others who may have the opportunity to follow us here. There are men and women in America, always I am sure, who are glad to render an unselfish service to their country and to their fellowmen.

I am sure we can never repay the debt that we owe to Mrs. Roebling and her husband who so faithfully supported her plans to create this beautiful spot here, for the vision that they had, for the willingness that they showed to develop this spot in a way that would preserve all of its natural beauties. While individuals may do a great deal to carry out a plan of this kind, it is impossible for any one person to do it alone.

It is quite well known that one of the best measures of a person's ability to realize their vision and their plans is the ability to select others to work with them and from what I have learned Mr. Roebing and Mrs. Roebing were very fortunate in their ability to draw about them a group of people, who not only understood and sympathized with the purpose they had in mind here, but had the ability to carry out their plans. I am told that Mr. Alexander Blair, who has been the representative of the Roebings for some years and whom we all listened to with a great deal of interest this afternoon, has accomplished a most outstanding work in the contribution that he made here; and because skill and training is necessary to preserve the natural beauties of an area of this character, it was necessary for a competent engineer to be associated in the work and here again the founders of this park were fortunate (for) the services of Mr. Joe W. Hawkins as the resident engineer.

In seeking the aid of some permanent organization to generally supervise the work, I am told that a Board of Trustees was created whose Executive Committee was composed of Mr. Rex Beach, Dr. W. A. Davison, Col. Bailey, Mr. Durrance, and Mr. Gallaher, and these men have shown by their devotion that they appreciated and realized the responsibilities that were placed upon them as Trustees of this beautiful property and have faithfully carried the trust that was reposed in them.

Of course it is necessary for some one to call such projects to the attention of those who are in a position to really do a job quite frequently because if their attention isn't addressed to the particular project they would never know anything about it. I am told that two men are mainly responsible for first calling the attention of Mrs. Roebing to the wonderful spot that existed here. These two men were Mr. Donaldson and Dr. White.

I am sure we all must appreciate the vision of all those who have made and continued to what is undoubtedly one of the finest examples of the preservation of a natural beauty spot that could be found anywhere on the face of this earth. I am not going to attempt to own what has already been said about Highlands Hammock. I couldn't improve upon it for none of us could possibly pay the tribute to this place that it deserves. We can only try to enjoy it to the very best of our ability.

Before I close I want to say just a word about the organization I have been privileged to be associated with for the past three years. While I didn't have any part in the immediate development here because it came along before our organization was created, we have had a very important part in creating hundreds in other localities that I am sure that those responsible for them will try to make them as beautiful as this is. I am

glad to hear Captain Warren pay tribute to the C.C.C. boys who have worked so faithfully and so successfully in the development and preservation of forests and parks, and I like to think that this organization is the best refutation that I can think of to the old slander that young people today don't want to work.

These boys have shown by personal conduct that they appreciated the privilege that was offered them and they have rendered a good day's service for every day that they have spent in a C.C.C. camp. Everyone connected with this organization has shown the finest possible spirit, from the heads of the National Park Service and the U. S. Forest Service on down through all of the steps, to the corps themselves, and if it hadn't been for that outstanding service and deep personal interest that has been shown by all who have part in the work, I am sure that organization could not have accomplished the record that has been performed and we could not have been able to win the local support we have in all of the 48 states. I am glad to pay my tribute to the army officers who have shown that they can suitably lead our young men without the necessity of having military discipline at their command. I pay tribute to the splendid efficiency with which they have conducted the camp for the welfare and the well-being of the young men who in the past three years have had an opportunity to have healthful employment in these camps.

It was very necessary that the work of these boy should be competently supervised. We are told that it is an ill wind that blows no good and because of the serious unemployment created by the depression we were able to draw to our service a great army of trained technical engineers and supervisors of all kinds who, under normal conditions, we could not have possibly secured to serve in this organization. I am glad to say that although these men are working for a very small part of the salaries that they would normally be able to command, they have given the finest service of which they were capable and they have been just as keenly interested in this work as any of us has been, and because of this spirit we have seen this organization go forward accomplishing things that just a few years ago no one dared dream possible, by seeing set up now within our lifetime a series of parks of which the nation will be proud for all time to come.

I am glad to hear one of the speakers acknowledge responsibility and admit the necessity for the State adequately providing for the maintenance and continued improvement of this and other parks, and I hope that that realization will come home to all of our state authorities, to our State Legislatures and our tax payers, because it is only through their support. Through money continually provided by them, we can hope to preserve and continue these beautiful recreational areas.

I am delighted to know that our C.C.C. boys have had such an important part in this work and I am proud of the service that they have rendered. No doubt most of you, and I hope all of you, are familiar with the camp that for three years almost has been located at the edge of your city. I hope that many of you have visited the camp and have become personally acquainted with those who are carrying on the work. If not, take advantage of your first opportunity to stop in and talk to the officers, the project superintendent, talk to the boys and learn personally of the fine work that these boys are doing not only for your welfare but for their own welfare and you will become just as enthusiastic as I am or anyone having a part in the work. I am sure I have never been privileged to be associated in any enterprise that has become a more personal pleasure and satisfaction than in having a part in carrying on the work of the C.C.C. camp.

I am delighted to be here today. I am only sorry that the visit is so brief, but can assure you that I will carry with me most pleasant memories of one of the most beautiful spots that I have seen in America and I will tell others of what they are missing. I hope that this locality may continue forever to furnish pleasure and inspiration to all who may have the privilege of coming here.



Robert Fechner Speaks to an Enrollee

Camp NP-14, Rock Creek Park, DC January 1939
photo from newdeal.feri.org