

LYNX CREEK CCC CAMP F-62-A
By Judy Stoycheff

The Civilian Conservation Corp Camp F-62-A, was located between Lynx Creek and Walker Road, approximately 12 miles S.E. of downtown Prescott, AZ. This Arizona forest Camp was also about 0.8 miles north of the historic mining town of Walker. In its heyday in the late 1800's, Walker had a population of about 3000 folks, with stores, saloons, a post office, blacksmith shops, lumber mill and dancehalls. A fire in the early 1900's destroyed all the business portion of town and it was never rebuilt as its chief enterprise, gold mining, was coming to a halt. Today, Walker has a solid core of full time residents and many summer home visitors. It has no enterprises, and the fire station is the social center of the village. Walker also does not have a Post Office although mail is delivered to individual mailboxes within the village, including one cluster of more than 100 boxes of varying design and condition. The former CCC camp was nestled next to the remnants of a former smelter, mill, and mining camp known as Howells, one of the many such camps along the gold laden Lynx Creek.. Located to the north of the creek on a small knoll this was briefly a tent home to about 250 miners and camp followers around 1880, and had its share of saloons, a dry goods store (Goldwaters) and a post office. Three cabins existed and were lived in on the banks of Lynx Creek for many years after the demise of the smelter, including the home of Frank and Marie Kuhnes, Walker pioneers. To the south of the former Camp, is the property and home of Loren Bykerk, grandson of Walker mining pioneer William Pritchett. Loren is a self proclaimed historian of the Walker area and was very helpful in sharing his personal knowledge and the photo's, movies and memories of his parents, John and Lorrene Bykerk. Lorrene Pritchett Bykerk also has an oral history recorded in 2001 at the Sharlot Hall Museum in Prescott, AZ. On Loren's property is the remnants of an old stone house that was the temporary home for many of Walker's transient and permanent residents.

The F-62-A camp was located on ten acres of Federally owned land (and some private) in tall pine and historically received a great deal of snow, making winter travel problematic and living conditions inhospitable if your residence is a tent! Consequently, this camp was occupied summers only from May 1934 to October 1937. In the earliest year, Company 860 was in residence, in 1935, the company is not known but probably 860; Company 2855 in 1936, and Company 2861 in the final year, 1937. There is no known evidence of where the 'boys' went during the winter, but it could have been Mayer, (F-33-A), or the Fairgrounds,(F-19-A)., both year round camps. In fall of 1937 the camp was turned over to the Soil Conservation Service, also a New Deal program. At some point between then and now, the National Forest Service (NFS) assumed ownership of the land the camp was on The NFS removed and/or burned the surviving CCC buildings and presumably the cabins by the creek in the early 1960's. There is a roadside marker regarding the historic existence of the camp as well as some concrete pads, etc remaining, and will be detailed below.

The F-62-A camp building record indicates that it had 35 frame quarters (portable or

tent) for enlisted men. These units would be heated, when needed, by wood burning stoves. Traditionally, this was a four man tent giving a total of a maximum of 140 “boys”. The tents were in three rows of ten, parallel to Walker road (at present) and 5 more were inexplicably separated from the others and closer to the existing road. (The road has been realigned since the days of the camp, but is essentially where it is now). The terrain in this area has a slope and it appears to have been somewhat terraced to allow the tents to lie flat and orderly within the limited space i.e. military style. Large rocks were laid out vertically and horizontally between the rows to indicate the walking paths, and several can still be seen today. The enrollee latrine (capacity of sixteen at any given time) was to the north of the tent rows and the bath (capacity of fourteen) was to the east, sharing the water and sewer line with the kitchen. The officer’s had four rigid buildings (probably made of wood with wood floor) with four rooms each (capacity of four officers to a building) and one building with a capacity of two, for a total number of officers of eighteen. It is possible that some of the instructors or LEMs (Local Experienced Men) lived in Prescott and commuted the 13 miles. The officers shower is located to the west of their quarters and on a sewer line. Their latrine was farther west and quite possibly both were located beyond the federal property and on private land. Latrines for both officers and enlisted men were pit, with no water connection.

The kitchen was on a concrete pad and was of rigid construction. The mess hall was portable with a possible concrete pad and had a capacity of 190 persons. A portion of a concrete pad in the area of the kitchen/mess hall exists today and the enlisted men’s shower pad is still in place. An earthen root cellar near the kitchen area can still be seen and the generator concrete housing remains. The pump houses (2) may not have been on concrete as no traces remains. Water for the showers and the kitchen was well water. The site of the well appears to be creek side and is now blocked with a large slab of concrete laid on top. Initials scratched on the well cap appear to be those of the builder Dale Haining. Four water storage tanks, 1000 chlorinated gallons each, were located in the Northeast section of the camp. No traces remain today. The camp had a septic tank that the bath houses and sinks were connected to, but the exact location is not known, possibly in Lynx Creek.

This camp had 2 infirmaries that shared a bath and latrine, with a total capacity of 10 patients at any given time. Merci Hospital was the closest hospital in Prescott, over 12 miles away. Located between the infirmaries and the Enrollees quarters, were 2 recreation buildings, 16 by 48 feet, and were described as a “Hospital Ward Tent”s. What was in these tents for recreation is not known but possibly a small library, ping pong table and radio accessibility. Sports were popular in the CCC camps, particularly boxing but this camp did not appear to have the open area for a boxing ring. Lorrene P. Bykerk mentions in her autobiography that her brother Worth would play ball and learn to wrestle with the CCC boys at the camp in Mayer. Quite possibly, wrestling was popular at Lynx also. The education tent was located near the mess tent and the Exchange was attached to the Store House. Headquarters was in the middle of the camp and was of a “Storage Tent” construction.

The above mentioned Lorrene Pritchett Bykerk was living in Walker by 1936 and thought there were a lot of “good looking men” at the CCC camp nearby. She recalls in her oral history, of going to dances in Prescott and finding many of the “boys” also attending. Getting into mischief is part of being a young male and these guys were not

above having some fun. Mrs. Bykerk wrote that the boys would split a pine sapling, tie it in a knot and they grew that way. Their main job during the summer months in this camp appears to have been beetle eradication in the forest, which is a recurring blight. It can be assumed, based on other forest based camps, that the young men would assist in wild fire suppression when the need was there.

Like all camps located near towns, the young men from F-62-A were transported to the local town which would be Prescott, for R and R. Movies, dances, sporting events, dining out (on \$5 per month?), imbibing in the establishments on Whiskey Row or the local soda fountain were all available to them. Quite possibly, they visited one or both of the other CCC camps in the Prescott area at Thumb Butte, the Fair Grounds or Groom Creek. A former CCC member who actually served in Phoenix and Safford, Micky¹Gracia, now 85 years old and a part time resident of Walker, recalls spending a day at the camp along Lynx Creek but does not recall the purpose of the visit with his Company.

The total cost of the buildings, presumably for materials only, comes to \$8977. A pump house was \$62.88, and the mess hall a whopping \$2725.

¹ by Loren Bykerk, 2013. Micky Garcia (not Gracia) passed away in early 2013, sometime between February 9 and May 11.