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Susurrations of the CCC

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Abstract:
The purpose of my research is to explore the use of anecdotal evidence and primary sources to locate and explain deviations from official records. For this study, I chose to look for a boxing ring constructed at the behest of the Commanding Officer of Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Company 2386 at Camp SP-24V in Chester, Virginia.

Background:
The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was a program created under the auspices of President Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal. From 1933 to 1942, three million men aged 17 to 25 built bridges, restored historic sites and structures, and created more than 800 parks across the United States (Edmond: 1917; including six in Virginia: First Landing, Fairy Stone, Hungry Mother, Staunton River, Prince William Forest, and Westmoreland. My research has focused on CCC Company 2386; which consisted of roughly 300 unskilled laborers, under the auspices of Captain Greenville L. Wright (AAC Reserve). The camp was established in 1933 under Captain Greenville L. Wright (AAC Reserve) and developed Camp SP-24V (State Park 24, Virginia), which eventually became Pocahontas State Park.

While much of the original CCC construction is still extant and being used, the work camp the men actually lived in was largely of modular construction and dismantled in the early 1940s. The pump house and a few crumbling foundations are all that remain in an otherwise empty field and surrounding forest.

Methodology:
From personal interaction with both Captain G.L. Wright, and his son, G.L. Wright, Jr; I heard stories about general life at the camp and “the Farmer and the Boxing Ring”. I later found the story mentioned again in an interview with Captain Wright published in 1984 (Knepler: 1984).

In 2012 I came across an aerial photograph of the camp (Figure 1), taken sometime in the mid-1930s, which clearly showed the ring. I now had tangible evidence of its general location within the park, and set out to find it.

I visited the field, and using the measurements of the pump house for scale (20 x 18 ft). I was able to make a rough overhead map from the ¼ perspective of the photograph. I then did a surface survey, and located the water tower footings, remnants of a sidewalk, and a crumbling foundation farther off into the woods. Using the measurements from this, I was able to gain a more accurate understanding of the camp layout and size.

I established my Datum on the Northwest water tower footing, and using my map, measurements I took on the ground, and satellite imagery, made a virtual grid of the site (Figures 2 and 3). The site is composed of five foot square excavation units, with each unit referenced by coordinates (Northings and Eastings) relative to the Datum.

If I were actually able to physically excavate the boxing ring, I would start by looking for the corners, around N362.5, W017.5; (Figure 4) and excavate out in a checkerboard pattern from there.

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Works Cited: