LAKE CATHERINE STATE PARK BRIDGE NO. 2
Arkansas Bridges 2005
Spanning creek at AR 171, Lake Catherine State Park
Malvern vicinity
Hot Spring County
Arkansas

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001
HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

LAKE CATHERINE STATE PARK BRIDGE No. 2

HAER No. AR-79

Location: Spanning an unnamed creek at AR 171, Lake Catherine State Park, Malvern vicinity, Hot Spring County, Arkansas

UTM: 15.505541.3809784, Lake Catherine, Arkansas Quad.

AHTD #: HS0073

Structural Type: Concrete slab

Construction Date: 1938-39

Designer: Rex C. Conner, Landscape Architect
Thomas H. Clay, Engineer

Builder: Civilian Conservation Corps Company 3777

Owner: Arkansas State Park Commission

Use: Vehicular bridge

Significance: Lake Catherine State Park is one of six Arkansas state parks developed in the 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps under the direction of the National Park Service. Bridge No. 2, the largest vehicular bridge within the park, is representative of park architecture of the period.

Project Information: The Arkansas Historic Bridges Recording Project is part of the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER), a long-range program that documents historically significant engineering sites and structures in the United States. HAER is administered by the Heritage Documentation Programs Division of the National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior, Richard O'Connor, Manager. The Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department sponsored this project.

Lola Bennett, HAER Historian, 2007

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1 Petit Jean, Mt. Nebo, Crowley's Ridge, Devil's Den, Lake Catherine and Buffalo Point are considered the "charter parks" of the Arkansas State Park system. When the Buffalo National River was created in 1972, Buffalo Point State Park was turned over to the U.S. Department of the Interior.
Chronology

1803  Louisiana Purchase doubles the size of the United States
1819  Arkansas Territory created from part of Louisiana Purchase
1836  Arkansas becomes 25th state to join the Union
1885  Niagara Falls becomes America's first state park
1916  National Park Service established
1921  National Park Service initiates National Conference on State Parks
1923  Arkansas Committee of State Lands authorized to accept land donations for state parks
1924  Arkansas Power & Light Company dams the Ouachita River, creating Lake Catherine
1927  Arkansas State Park Commission created
1929  U.S. stock market crash marks beginning of the Great Depression
1932  President Franklin D. Roosevelt proposes unemployment relief programs
1933  Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) created
       CCC Company 1781-V begins development of Petit Jean State Park
1935  Industrial magnate Harvey Couch deeds land for Lake Catherine State Park
1937  CCC Company 3777 begins development of Lake Catherine State Park
1938  National Park Service approves plans for Lake Catherine State Park bridges
1939  Lake Catherine State Park bridges completed
1942  CCC Company 3777 disbands
       Lake Catherine State Park opens to visitors
1992  Bridge No. 2 listed in the National Register of Historic Places
Description

Bridge No. 2 is the larger of two extant Civilian Conservation Corps-built bridges in Lake Catherine State Park. It is a single-span reinforced concrete slab bridge with stone-faced concrete abutments and parapet walls. The bridge is approximately 25' long, 28' wide and 10' high, with a 10' clear span. The concrete slab is 16" thick. Designed to resemble a timber stringer bridge on stone abutments, the structure originally had squared timbers along the outer faces of the concrete slab. The timbers have since decayed or been removed.3

History

In March 1935, Harvey C. Couch (1877-1941), President of Arkansas Power and Light Company, deeded 2,700 acres of land to the State of Arkansas, with a stipulation that the land be developed as a state park.4 Located 25 miles southeast of Hot Springs, in the rugged Ouachita Mountains, the property included numerous mountain springs and waterfalls and 10 miles of shoreline on Lake Catherine.5 The lake, formed in 1924, when Arkansas' first hydroelectric dam was built on the Ouachita River, was considered an ideal spot for a new state park. In June 1935, the Arkansas State Park Commission and the National Park Service (NPS) began developing plans for Lake Catherine State Park.6

In September 1937, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) transferred members of Company 3777 from Little Rock to Malvern, Arkansas, to begin work at Lake Catherine.7 Construction began on the park entrance road October 1, 1937.8 The NPS approved plans for park bridges in May 1938, and they were completed in 1938-39.9 Newspaper accounts indicate that WPA work crews built the road and bridges outside the park boundary at about the same time.10

2 Three bridges have been identified within the park boundaries:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BRIDGE No.</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>BUILDER</th>
<th>SPANS</th>
<th>LENGTH (')</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>DITCH</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>CCC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>STONE-FACED CONCRETE SLAB</td>
<td>CULVERT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>UNNAMED CREEK</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>CCC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>STONE-FACED CONCRETE SLAB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>SLUGGER CREEK</td>
<td></td>
<td>AHTD</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>MODERN CONCRETE SLAB</td>
<td>REPLACED CCC BRIDGE (?)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bridge No. 1 is a smaller CCC-built structure not included in the 1992 National Register nomination.

5 Lake Catherine was named for Arkansas Power & Light Company President Harvey Couch's daughter.
7 "CCC Unit Obtained for State Park Near Here," Malvern Daily Record, 10 September 1937.
8 Arkansas Gazette (Little Rock, Arkansas), 18 September 1937.
9 Arkansas State Park Commission, Third Annual Report, 5 December 1939, 10.
10 Additional information is needed on the remaining AR 171 bridges. Features of the bridge at MP 1.45, particularly its stone-faced piers, suggest that it may be an extant WPA structure.
Between 1938 and 1942, CCC Company 3777 completed Lake Catherine State Park's facilities, including utility systems, a camping area, several housekeeping cabins, hiking trails, a beach, a boathouse and a fleet of rowboats. The park officially opened to the public in 1942.

**Builder**

The Civilian Conservation Corps was a government-sponsored Depression-era recovery program that conducted public-works projects primarily on federal and state lands. From its inception in 1933 until 1942, the CCC employed almost 3 million young men nationwide to do over 100 types of manual labor, including planting trees, sodding farmland, erecting fences, building roads and developing recreational areas.

In Arkansas, a significant portion of the CCC's work was constructing state park facilities at Petit Jean, Mt. Nebo, Crowley's Ridge, Devil's Den, Lake Catherine and Buffalo Point.\(^{11}\) CCC Company 3777 organized at Devil's Den State Park in 1935, and later moved to Boyle Park in Little Rock, before transferring to Lake Catherine in the fall of 1937. Development of Lake Catherine State Park took place in 1937-1942 under the supervision of the Arkansas State Park Commission and the National Park Service.

Approximately 170 CCC enrollees worked six hours a day, five days a week, for which they received $1 per day, room and board, clothing and vocational training. Project superintendents Gilbert G. Lawson (1937-39) and Roy C. Donaldson (1940-42) oversaw the work.\(^{12}\) Engineer Thomas H. Clay, landscape architect Rex C. Conner and stone mason William A. Mills supervised road and bridge construction.\(^{13}\)

**Design**

"In any area in which preservation of the beauty of Nature is a primary purpose, every proposed modification of the natural landscape deserves to be most thoughtfully considered."

-Arno B. Cammerer, Director, National Park Service, 1938\(^{14}\)

In the 1930s, the National Park Service's design ethic was applied to the development of state and local parks. Architects and engineers used naturalistic landscape principles and indigenous materials to design permanent, utilitarian structures that harmonized with their natural

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\(^{11}\) *Memories of Arkansas District Civilian Conservation Corps*, 1940.
\(^{13}\) Civilian Conservation Corps, "Technical Personnel, Camp No. SP-9, Arkansas," 2 June 1939.
surroundings and added rustic appeal to the landscape.\textsuperscript{15} Combining reinforced concrete construction with rustic timber and stone elements, Lake Catherine State Park Bridge No. 2 is highly representative of Depression-era park architecture.

\textsuperscript{15} Good, 175-176.
Sources


Arkansas State Park Commission. Annual Reports, 1937-1942.


Dye, Homer, “New Type of Rustic Art Appears,” Arkansas Democrat, 19 August 1934.

"Further Work Planned for State Parks," Arkansas Gazette, 8 February 1936.


Hull, Clifton E, "CCC Made Top Contribution during Depression," Arkansas Gazette, 23 August 1970, 4E.

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National Park Service. Records of the Land and Recreational Planning Division, Record Group 79.4.5, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.


"State Park Commission Soon Will be Inviting Visitors to Lake Catherine," Arkansas Gazette, 2 July 1935.