

Brown County Journal

February 15, 2012

Events:

Brown County Historical
Society meeting
March 5

Brown County Genealogical
Society meeting
March 13

Genealogy Workshops
Feb. 15, 22, 29, & March 7

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Rhonda D.

CCC Camp in Brown County

In the 1930s the country was trying to recover from the Great Depression. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt came up with a plan as part of his New Deal to put poor Americans to work. It was also designed to develop and conserve the nation's natural resources. He created the Civil Conservation Corps and whoever wanted to work was sent to camps to work on our State Parks and other projects that could use good laborers. The enrollees made \$30 a month and were for the most part single young men. Here in our county it started when Company 517 consisting of young men from Indiana were sent to Brown County from Fort Benjamin Harrison under the command of Captain William S. Evans. Their goal was to make improvements to the Game Preserve, which later became the Brown County State Park. It was destined to be one of the biggest and best in Indiana.

When the CCC boys arrived at Camp S-53 in June of 1933 they found weeds, man-high briars, undergrowth, and sassafras forming an almost impenetrable jungle. They were to build their new home here on this hill, now named Weed Patch Hill. After about a month setting up a temporary camp at Kelp they got the word they were to be moved to Jackson County. In July of 1933 a new group of 133 men, Company 1561, consisting of war veterans was sent by train to Helmsburg. They came from Fort Knox, Kentucky under the command of G. S. Burket. When they arrived they found, to quote what they said about their new home, "a more desolate or forsaken spot could not have been found anywhere." But the old army spirit was still embedded in these veterans, and enough space was soon cleared to unload the Company's temporary home tents, bedding, food, stoves, and supplies. A week later Company 1557, a group of young men, arrived in Camp under the command of Major Hanley. Both companies of men were put to work on the various projects laid out for improvements for the Preserve. The mess halls



were the first permanent buildings to be constructed. Water was the biggest problem. The water supply had to be hauled in, bathing was accomplished in the nearby creeks until bath houses could be built, and finally water was pumped from the nearby lake. Finally by December with winter pressing on them the last of the barracks were finished.

No time was lost during the winter with projects proceeding as planned - only one day was lost due to the weather. During this time vocational training was also offered to the workers. Local Brown County men were appointed as foremen from the ranks of the unemployed. Projects that were taken on were soil erosion control, equipping the recreation buildings in the Preserve, a tree nursery of 20 acres of seedlings, a new two-way highway around the loop in the Preserve, look-out towers built of logs, and rearing pens for game birds. Pens for animals such as fox, raccoon, mink were built, walking trails were constructed, and they

helped to raise and restock fish in the lakes. At the home of the game breeder, Millard Morrison, were the laying pens raising pheasant for release in the Preserve and other Indiana parks. His assistant was Leo Crops. Custodian of the Preserve, Lon Weddle, designated the place and kind of work to be done and Superintendent Albert J. Foley chose the men for the different squads.

Most of the original members were Hoosiers and some of them were from Brown County. As the popularity of the CCC grew a great influx of new members were brought in from states all over the country. They were also sent all over the state to help on other park projects. They were sent to the southern part of the state for flood relief and many other emergencies - all temporarily to return to their work here. These CCCers not only helped build most of the features still found in the State Park but also helped fight fires throughout the county and on two occasions helped on searches for a missing child and an elderly woman. One of the enrollees, Millard Campbell of Co. 1561 became Sheriff of Brown County in 1934. They held baseball games and played against other camps as well as teams from Brown County. The vets started a newsletter called the Weed Patch Vets Gazette. By this time it had become a pretty close community.

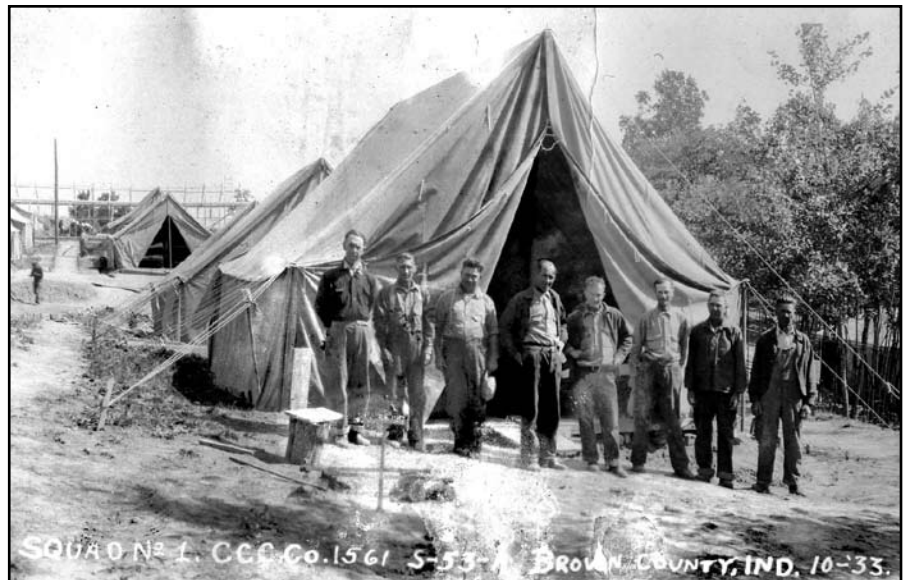


In the late 1930s the CCC men had built most all the park features that you can now see if you take a drive around the park. In the summers the park conducts a walking tour of the remnants of the CCC camp. All in all President Roosevelt's dream had been a boon for Brown County. At its end in 1942 the CCC had employed over 3 million men. "One of the very special things about our state park system and its rich history lies in the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps. Many of the roads, shelters, restrooms, gatehouses, and bridges still in use today were built by these young men during the Great Depression. We still marvel at the craftsmanship, the simple, rustic design and the way these facilities have remained to set the tone for all that has followed."

(Information from: Logbook of CCC Company 1561 at the Brown County Historical Society Archives; Susan Douglas of the Department of Natural Resources, Brown County State Park who has been researching the history of the CCC camps; Brown County Democrat articles of July 1933; Indiana University webpage "Indiana and the Civil Conservation Corps" at <http://www.indiana.edu/~libsalc/newdeal/CCC.html>)

1933-35 Local Members

Arquette, Boyd - Nashville
Davis, William M. - Nashville
Erton, Henry - Nashville
Kellison, Harry O. - Nashville
Rawlings, Rollie D. - Nashville
Thompson, William A. - Nashville
Fishel, Elmer E. - Trevlac
Jackson, Ora C. - Trevlac
Bushong, Charles - Helmsburg
Hawkins, Hobart H. - Helmsburg
Derrington, Terence A. - Mellott
Beck, George - Trafalgar



Brown County men - Aquilla Moore has been identified as the third man from the left.

The Crabbites

I've come across many good stories since I started working as Archivist of our local Historical Society. This one was one of those that intrigued me, so I had to find out more. An article from the local newspaper, the Brown County Democrat of Sept. 5, 1907 gave the report of a local religious leader and his congregation. Reverend William Crabb had quite a following in the early 1900s. His church was called the Church of the First Born and had many a strange belief. William Crabb was a man of little education, but a forceful and convincing speaker who seemed to have obtained a strong hold on his 300 followers. As a summer attraction in the wilds of Brown County the Crabbite service proved very

popular. Crabb himself asked no pay for his work, and even scorned to use a regular meeting house. He preached from a stump in the woods. Pastor Crabb asserted that he could handle snakes without danger to himself, and he had been giving free exhibitions as a side issue to help draw in his audience.

The Church of the First Born was started when two men from Indianapolis appeared on Gose Creek in Morgan County and began to teach the people marvelous things. They declared all other doctrines were false and that they were possessed of miraculous power.

Soon the people became wild with excitement and the little old log church was crowded day and night with seekers after the new faith.

This new faith believes that the earth is square, offering as proof the seventh chapter and first verse of the Book of Revelations: 'And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor the sea, nor any tree.' They taught that Jesus was not born in a manger but instead born under an apple tree. The



Log Church Where Crabbites Held Their Meetings

elders of the church do not quote the Bible to prove their assertions but claim divine inspiration, and the congregation must accept these as facts presented to them. Sickness is banished by the laying on of hands and anointing of oil. The elders are supposed to be able to cast out devils.

As with any new religion there are those that seek to ridicule it as well. The church on Gose Creek was finally destroyed by dynamite by vandals and the congregation scattered to other locations. The majority of the people transferred their membership to the Brown County leader, William Crabb, who had established an open air church in a grove on top of a hill near Nashville. Reverend Crabb "has become a zealot and carries his people with him. He is the father of thirteen children, twelve of them girls," as quoted by the newspaper article. This was an interesting article in the newspaper so I decided to see if there was any proof in it. It's easy to read a story and try to imagine how these events went down, but it makes it much more interesting when you start investigating it. The first and easiest thing to check would be for an obituary for him or any of this family.

In the Brown County Democrat of Dec. 15, 1927 it stated, "William Crabb - Died Saturday at his home near Mahalasville at age 70. A son of A. J. Crabb, he formerly lived near Nashville. His is the father of Mary A. Satters." It was a very short obituary so I decided to check for one in Morgan County as well.

That one read, "William Crabb, age 71, died at his home southwest of town [Morgantown] Sunday, having suffered a paralytic stroke on Wednesday. Surviving are the wife and ten children. Funeral services were held at Mt. Zion church Tuesday morning at ten o'clock. Burial in Mt. Zion Cemetery."

From the first obit it confirmed he had lived near Nashville. It also gave his father's name and a daughter's married name. That could be helpful later on. The second obit confirmed that he had at least ten children that survived him, so he did have more children at one time. This one also gave his burial location and possibly the last church he was associated with. Neither one stated though that he had been a pastor. While checking obituaries I decided to look for one for his daughter, Mrs. Mary A. Satters. One was found in the Morgan County dated July 18, 1959. Hers read, "Mrs. Satters was born in Brown County 68 years ago, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Crab. She had lived in Morgantown community for the past 40 years and was a member of the Church of the First Born in Martinsville. She was married to Anthony Tony Satters who died a few years ago. Survivors include . . . [besides children] seven sisters and one brother . . . Burial will be in East Hill Cemetery." This one held a lot of good information; it confirmed who her parents were and also that she was formerly from Brown County. It also confirmed she came from a large family composed mostly of sisters as stated in Reverend Crabb's newspaper article. But most importantly it affirmed she indeed was a member of the same church, The Church of the First Born.

From facts collected on the family their information follows. William Crabb was born in 1858 in Barren Co., Kentucky and died Dec. 3, 1927 near Martinsville, Indiana. He was the son of Abraham J. Crabb and Mahala Tanner. He was married to Mary Ann Petro on Oct. 19, 1879, the daughter of Joseph Petro and Jane Hawkins. Not much is known of their 13 children, but by checking in the census one can get a list of names and try to track them down. In the 1900 census their children's names were: Jemima, Martha, Anna, Liza, Minnie, Lillie, and Frank. We know he had one daughter from the obituary, Mary Ann Crabb (the Anna listed above). From the 1910 census we can add two more children: Tuchulia and Idela.

Family facts and figures never stated that he was indeed a pastor, but a lot of good information can be obtained from old newspapers especially if you're doing the genealogy of your family. Don't take everything written on paper as absolute, spelling can be wrong, information can be wrong, and sometimes the whole article can be completely false. You just need to use your own good judgement and make sure to look for other documentation to support it. Reverend William Crabb was indeed a Brown County character. It is characters such as this that make Brown County history interesting.

Genealogy Workshops - "Who do you Think You Are? - Brown County version

February 15, 22, 29, & March 7 from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. at the Brown County Library. Join Diana Biddle as she explains how to research your family history. Email dlynbid@gmail.com to register for the workshops.
