

Auto - Walking Tour of Robbers Cave State Park's Historic Structures

**A guide to some of Robbers Cave State Park's
distinctive and important historic structures.**



Introduction

President Franklin Roosevelt's "New Deal" program in 1933 gave meaningful work to millions of unemployed Americans. Through the New Deal, roads, bridges and dams were built; forests and shelter-belts were planted; and city, state and national park facilities were constructed. The New Deal provided the impetus for the development of Oklahoma's first state parks. Robbers Cave State Park has the distinction of being one of those parks that was built during the New Deal era of the 1930's.

One of the most important programs within Roosevelt's New Deal was the Civilian Conservation Corps. The chief purposes of the CCC were to conserve the nation's natural resources and to provide jobs and job training for unemployed youth. Through the combined talents and hard work of National Park Service architects and the Civilian Conservation Corps enrollees, and U.S. Army camp supervisors, new parks were built throughout America.

Robbers Cave State Park began as a boy scout camp and state game preserve. Through the efforts of Carlton Weaver, a state political leader, this area was selected to receive a CCC camp. Park development began in 1935. Unlike most CCC camps which consisted of unmarried men between the ages of 18 and 25, the majority of the CCC enrollees at Robbers Cave were World War I veterans. While the

men of the CCC built the park's facilities, the dam that forms Lake Carlton was constructed by local men who worked for another New Deal program, the Works Progress Administration - the WPA.



Robbers Cave State Park, as well as other park facilities of this region, were designed by Herbert Maier and his team of architects, engineers and landscape designers. Based on his design work in the 1920's at Yellowstone, Grand Canyon and Yosemite National Parks, Maier was highly acclaimed for his "rustic" park structures. Maier's buildings were made of native stone and large timbers. They were designed so as to blend into the landscape.



L. to R. Dr. Bumpus,
Kenneth Charley and
Herbert Maier at Norris Museum Construction within Yellowstone National Park, 1929.
Courtesy of the National Parks Service.

In 2002, Robbers Cave State Park was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in recognition of its value as an important component of America's architectural and cultural history.

Description of the Auto and Walking Tour

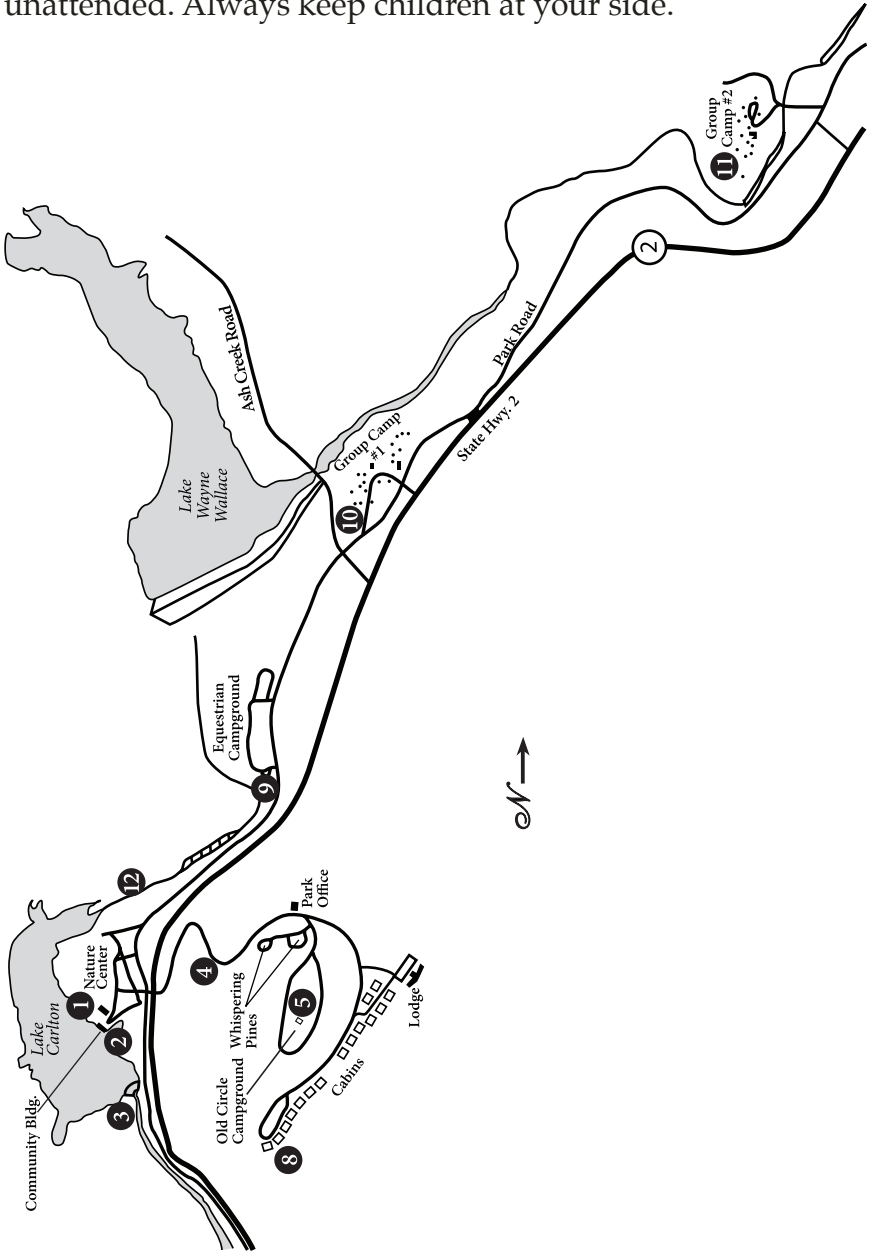
This tour highlights some of Robbers Cave State Park's historic CCC and WPA structures.

Those facilities that are easily viewed from a car or that have a hard-surface walkway are listed in this pamphlet as (Easy View).

Before walking up to cabins, picnic pavilion, and group camps, please check with the park office to determine if these facilities are already being used by other park guests. If they are rented, please do not walk near these buildings.

For Your Safety

Please be careful as you stop your vehicle and walk to each viewing station. Park your vehicle off of the park roadway. Always be alert to traffic and never let children walk unattended. Always keep children at your side.



Station No. 1 Park Nature Center

Completed in 1936, this building originally served as a bathhouse for those who swam in Lake Carlton.

The sandstone rock and rough-hewn timbers of this impressive building exemplify

the architectural style called “National Park Service rustic.” Like other CCC-built structures in this park, these buildings blend into the natural setting.



The massive rocks of this building came from a quarry within the park. With great effort, each rock was lifted into place by means of truck-mounted gin poles and winches. Forty years after the project was completed, Gene Hudspeth, the crew foreman for this building, clearly remembered the difficulty of finding stone that suited the Park Service’s field inspector. Each stone was carefully placed into position on the building. At that point the inspector made the decision whether it stayed or had to be removed. Many large stones didn’t pass this inspector’s quality standard. Because of the keen eye, effort and skill of these men, a beautiful building was crafted.

By the 1970’s this building had fallen into disrepair. In 1994, park crews, under the direction of John Barnes, skillfully restored this historic building. It now serves as the park nature center. (Easy View)

Station No. 2 Former Boathouse

Underneath the park’s community building are the remains of a former CCC-built boathouse. The community building was not built by the CCC. Silt in the lake prevents the boathouse stalls from being used again. (Easy View)

Station No. 3

Lake Carlton Dam

Although the CCC built the first dam at this location, it had to be redesigned and rebuilt by the WPA. (Easy View)



Station No. 4 Park

Manager's Residence

Completed in 1940, this residence has been modernized, but still retains its original CCC character. (Easy View)

Station No. 5 Bathhouse in Old Circle Campground

Completed in 1938, this low, gabled building clearly reflects the design of Herbert Maier and his National Park Service architects. The building appears to have sprouted from the ground. (Easy View)

Station No. 6 Metal Park Signs



Scattered throughout Old Circle Campground and other areas of Robbers Cave State Park are metal signs. These signs were forged out of sheet iron by a CCC blacksmith, Jud Bagwell. Mr. Bagwell also made metal hinges and door

handles for all of the park's CCC buildings. (Easy View)

Station No. 7 Culverts

Within Old Circle Campground are several small, native stone culverts. (Easy View) The CCC built many culverts throughout the park. Large culverts underneath the main park road were also built by the CCC.

Station No. 8 Park Cabins

Cabins number 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 107, 108, 109 and 110 were all built by the CCC. The original cabin number 106 was lost to fire and was rebuilt in 1970. Although each of these cabins have received some restoration, their original design character has been maintained. (Easy View)



Station No. 9 Shelter

Located at the south end of the Equestrian Campground, this stone building was built in 1935. At that time it served as a pumphouse and water treatment facility for the park. In 1939 it was decided to remove the treatment facility to a more remote area of the park. The building's roof was raised so that it could serve as a picnic shelter. (Easy View)



Station No. 10 Group Camp No. 1

This is the site of the CCC camp No. 1825. The community building served the CCC's as their mess hall. A pavilion, several storage buildings, the flag pole and the rock council ring were also part of the CCC camp. (Easy View)

Station No. 11 Group Camp No. 2

This group camp is the original Tom Hale Boy Scout Camp. The community building and most of the cabins were built in 1931, four years before the CCC camp began. Carlton Weaver and Tom Hale, a businessman from McAlester, were the principal organizers of this scout camp. Although these buildings were not designed by the National Park Service,



they share a common design objective: to construct buildings that use native materials and that fit into the natural setting. As the CCC's built Robbers Cave State Park, Tom Hale Boy Scout Camp became a part of this new state park. (Easy View)



Station No. 12 Engine House & Low Water Dam

Along the Fourche Maline Outdoor Classroom Trail you will discover more secluded treasures. This CCC engine house contained a motor (Hercules Motor Company, 1912-1934) with an electric

generator. The building also provided space to work and storage for gasoline fuel. The engine house was built at this location to reduce the interference of engine noise.

Also at several locations throughout Robbers Cave State Park you will discover low water dams like this one built by the CCC. These dams ranged in size from small stone, earth, or brush "gully stoppers" used to combat soil erosion, to large earth and concrete edifices similar to the dam on Lake Carlton which involved months of labor. Most dams, however, were of the small variety. (Short Hike)



**Interested in the Restoration and Preservation
of this Park's Historic Structures?**

**Contact Oklahoma State Parks at (405) 230-8300
to find out ways that you can help to preserve
these irreplaceable structures.**