

# Auto-Walking Tour of Lake Murray State Park's Historic Structures

A guide to some of Lake Murray State Park's  
distinctive and irreplaceable historic structures.



## Introduction

President Franklin Roosevelt's "New Deal" program in 1933 provided the impetus for the development of community, state and national park facilities. Through the combined talents and hard work of National Park Service architects and the men of the Civilian Conservation Corps, Works Progress Administration and other public works programs, park projects were begun all across America.

Seizing on this historic opportunity, Louis Fischl, John Steele Batson, Fred Tucker, C.W. Tomlinson and other local leaders, pushed for the construction of a lake and state park south of Ardmore. The Oklahoma legislature appropriated \$90,000 for the purchase of 16,500 acres for this recreational development. In 1933 Governor Alfalfa Bill Murray signed this appropriations bill when he was assured that the park and lake would be named in his honor.

Following land acquisition, actual construction of Lake Murray State Park began in 1933. There were two CCC camps at Lake Murray, Camp #1813 was located on the west side of the lake, and Camp #834 was on the east side of the future state park.

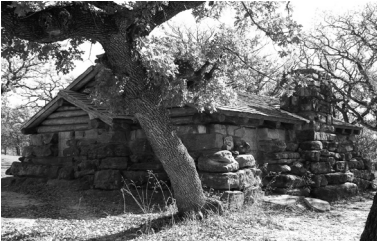


Lake Murray State Park, as well as other park facilities of this region, were designed by Herbert Maier and his team

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.

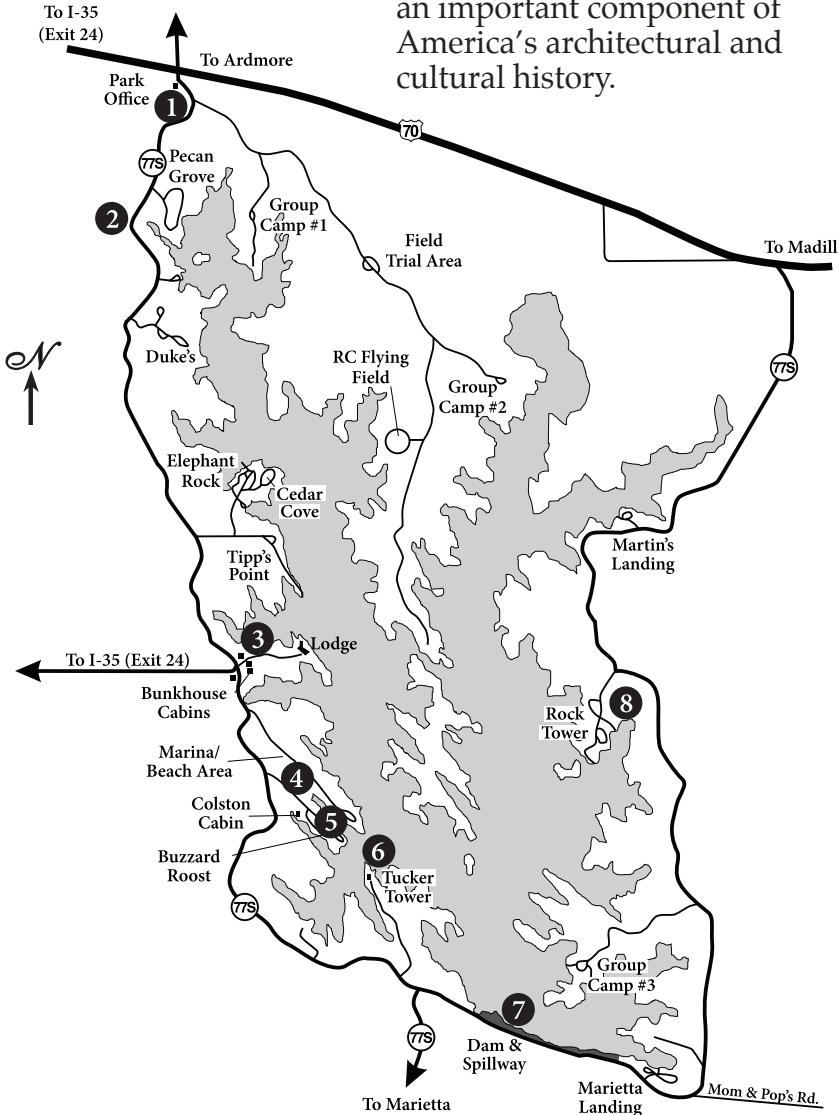


L. to R. Dr. Bumpus, Kenneth Charley and Herbert Maier at Norris Museum Construction within Yellowstone National Park, 1929. Courtesy of the National Parks Service.



Maier's buildings were made of native stone and large timbers. They were designed to blend into the landscape.

In 2001, Lake Murray 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 Lake Murray's historic structures. This tour is divided into three parts.

**Part One:** features that are located in the north and west portions of the park.

**Part Two:** features in the south and east areas of this large park.

**Part Three:** the park's three group camps and cabin areas. Because these facilities are often rented they may not be available for viewing. Check with the park office before traveling to the group camps or cabin areas.

## **For Your Safety**

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



Those facilities that can be easily seen from a car or that have a hard-surface walkway are listed in this pamphlet as "Easy View".





## **Part One**

### **Station No. 1 Lake Murray State Park Office**

This structure was originally built as a visitor contact station and employee residence. By the 1970's this building had deteriorated. In 1982 this structure was renovated by park personnel and became the park office. Even though



another of Lake Murray's historic buildings will become the new park office, this structure will always be an important historic feature of this park. (Easy View)

### **Station No. 2 Johnson Memorial Bridge**

This keystone-arched bridge is named in honor of E.J. Johnson, the project superintendent for the CCC work at Lake Murray from 1935 to 1942. For your safety, park on the east side of the roadway. Be alert to traffic on Scenic 77 highway. (Easy View)



### **Station No. 3**

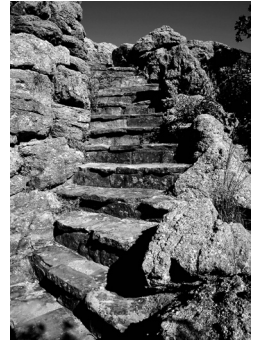
#### **Water Tower and Pump House**

The well, pump house and water tower were vital to the park's cabins and lodge during the initial years of their operation. These structures were abandoned in the mid-1950's when a new water treatment facility was built for the park and lodge. To access, turn onto the road that leads to the lodge. (Easy View)



**Station No. 4**  
**Water Tank and Observation Platform**  
**at Buzzard Roost Campground**

On the ridge above you is a concrete lined water tank that blends into the hillside. This structure offers an excellent view of the lake and park. Be careful as you walk this rocky path.



**Station No. 5**  
**CCC Picnic Shelter at Buzzard Roost**

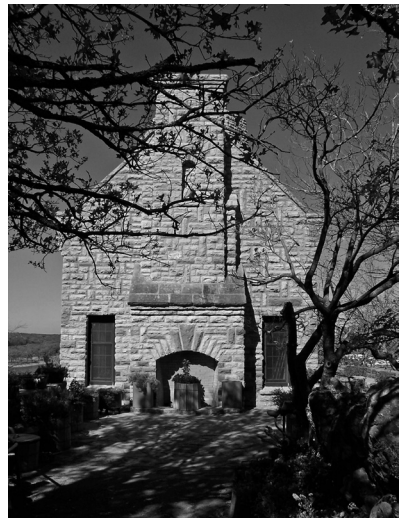
Constructed of large timbers and un-cut, native stone, this shelter reflects the style of architecture called “National Park Service rustic”. (Easy View)



**Part Two**

**Station No. 6 Tucker Tower**

Tucker Tower is easily the most identifiable structure within any Oklahoma State Park. Built as a museum, local legends say the tower was intended to be a retreat for Oklahoma governors, but never served in that capacity. Designed and primarily built by the WPA, the structure wasn't completed until 1954. It first served as a geological museum. In the late 1970's Tucker Tower became the park's nature center.

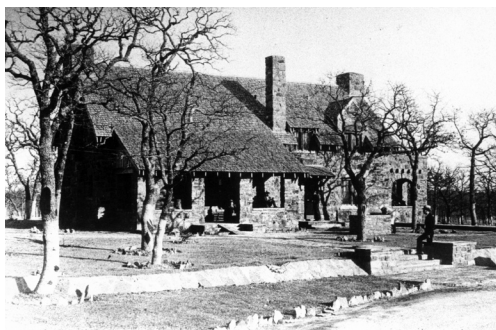


### **Station No. 7 Dam and Spillway**

Initially many people were skeptical that a lake could be built here. Local geologists, led by C.W. Tomlinson, knew that naturally occurring springs in the valleys south of Ardmore could fill and sustain a large lake. The Lake Murray Dam and Spillway were built by local people who were employed by the WPA and other public works agencies. The lake filled by 1938.

### **Station No. 8 Rock Tower Campground**

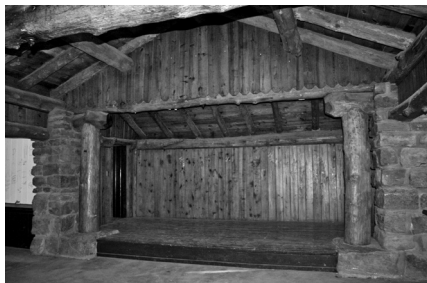
During the construction of the park, National Park Service project architects used the "Rock House" as their east regional headquarters.



This impressive building was lost to fire in the early 1940's. All that now remains are the water tower, a flower planter and a few stone steps. A picnic shelter is now on the site of the "Rock House". (ADA accessible)

### **Part Three - Group Camps**

Lake Murray has three CCC-built group camp areas. Each of these camps have a number of architecturally and historically significant buildings. Rustic cabins feature uncut native stone and large timbers.



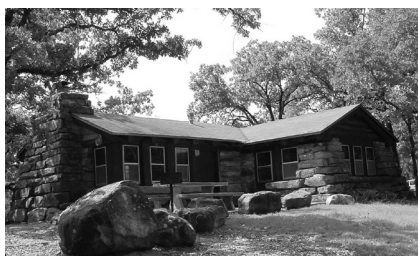


Group Camps #1 and #2 are located in the north portion of the park. Group Camp #3 is located in the southeast quadrant of the park. When Lake Murray State Park was built in the 1930's, racial segregation prevented African Americans

from using most of the park's recreational facilities. Group Camp #3 was built to serve African American families. In the 1930's it was the only complete, permanent camping facility for African Americans in Oklahoma. Racial segregation of this state park's facilities ended in the early 1960's.

### Park Cabins

There are three beautiful, native stone cabins that demonstrate the "rustic" style of designing a building from the ground-up. Two of these cabins, called bunkhouses, are located off of the lodge road. A third structure, the Colston Cabin, is in the Buzzard Roost area of the park.



Check with the park office before visiting the park group camps and these CCC-cabins. These facilities are rented throughout the year.

**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.**