

S-12178. Ellendale State Forest
(PIN: multiple)
(Detail Maps #3, #4 & #5)

Description and History: The Ellendale Tract, originally the Ellendale State Forest, is located south of Ellendale on both the east and west sides of U.S. 113. It is bounded to the south by the Gravelly Branch tax ditch and Robbins Road (CR 579). The entirety of the tract consists of 1,721 acres divided into 27 tree stands, 13 on the east side of U.S. 113 and 14 on the west side of U.S. 113. The stands reflect forestry management practices but do not always correspond to historic parcel boundaries (see attached maps). The following stands adjoin U.S. 113:

Stand #6 (100.2 acres) is located on the northern boundary of the Ellendale Tract on the west side of U.S. 113. A natural stand, established in about 1915, it consists of relatively poor quality mixed hardwoods including sweetgum, white oak and willow oak, along with scattered loblolly and pond pines. All of Stand 6 was acquired by the state prior to 1939.

Stand #7 (101.4 acres) is located on the west and east sides of U.S. 113, lying south of Stand 6 on the western portion and north of Stand 17 in the east portion. The stand, established in about 1915, consists of a mixture of large loblolly pines, along with Virginia pine, white and red oaks, and other mixed hardwoods. The western portion of Stand 7 was acquired before 1939, but most of the eastern part of the stand was not made part of the forest until after 1957.

Stand #8 (40.5 acres) is located on the west side of U.S. 113 on the south side of an access road maintained by the Delaware Forest Service. The stand, established in about 1915, consists of a mixture of large loblolly pines, Virginia pine, red oak, and white oaks, as well as a substantial volume of low quality mixed hardwoods.

Stand #9 (37.2 acres) is located along a prong of Maple Branch on the west side of U.S. 113. A natural stand, established in about 1915, it consists of relatively poor quality mixed hardwoods including sweetgum, blackgum, and red maple. All of Stand 9 was added to the forest prior to 1939.

Stand #17 (55.4 acres) is located between U.S. 113 and Old State Road near the southern end of the Ellendale Tract. This Loblolly pine plantation was established in 1988. Approximately nine acres of the stand that fronts U.S. 113 consists of low-value bottomland hardwood. The entirety of the stand has been part of the Ellendale Tract since before 1939.

Stand #25 (9.7 acres) includes the National Register-listed picnic pavilion (S-08151) on the east side of U.S. 113 along with a 3-acre buffer around the pavilion. The site consists of large mixed hardwoods and scattered loblolly pines (Burkentine 2008). Along with Stand 21, this is the original 40-acre parcel that constituted the new Ellendale State Forest in 1932.

The Ellendale State Forest consists of numerous tracts acquired at varying times. The earliest portions of the forest were located mostly along the DuPont Highway, with the largest areas on the west side of the road. During the 1940s and 1950s, the core of the forest was expanded

eastward, to the other side of U.S. 113. Most of the expansion since 1958 has been on the periphery of the forest.

The Ellendale State Forest was established in the heart of the Ellendale Swamp, an exceptional forest area containing the largest contiguous densely forested land in the State. It was developed largely for its forestry potential as well as maintained for the prevention of fires, but its recreational value was also recognized. In addition to plans to plant vacant areas of abandoned farmland, the Forestry Department initiated programs to improve existing roads and trails as well as erect campsite/picnic facilities adjacent to the DuPont Highway.

Under the State Forestry Department's lead and administration, the CCC conducted numerous projects within the Ellendale State Forest, many of which centered around construction of elements of the picnic facility. Projects for the years 1937 through mid-1939 listed in Delaware CCC records include the following for the Ellendale State Forest:

- Project #120a. Construction of a picnic pavilion near the DuPont Highway;
- Project #120c. Construction of a sheltered picnic table and bench;
- Project #139b. Construction of an incinerator at the picnic area;
- Project #157c. Construction of five benches for picnic area;
- Project #157d. Construction of two table and bench combinations for wayside;
- Project #705b. Landscaping at picnic area;
- Project #603. Fire hazard reduction along the DuPont Highway by trimming trees and removing brush;
- Project #132. Construction of guardrail at picnic area;
- Project #1010. Marking boundaries with concrete monuments.

Aside from tree stands, the Ellendale Tract contains the CCC picnic facility, numerous waterways (both natural and man-made), three known boundary monuments, and three prominent forest roads. The only boundary monument that is close to U.S. 113 is no longer *in situ*, having been uprooted and thrown into the woods during an earlier road construction project (Webb 2009). One of the roads provides access into the forest from U.S. 113, one from Old State Road, and one from Robbins Road. The roads are not interconnected. While some of the ditches may have originated during the CCC era, improvements were made to them in the 1970s, and more ditches were added to the system. Other than the picnic facility, there are no known standing structures within the tract.

Aerial photographs confirm that there are likely to be few historic-period resources within the Ellendale Tract. In 1937 most of the land that is now part of the tract was heavily forested. The only cleared areas that may have contained farm buildings are located in portions of the forest acquired after 1957. There appear to be more cleared areas on the 1962 aerial, but, again, these are largely in parcels acquired by the state at a later date, and by 2003 no buildings are evident on the aerial photograph.

Applicable Historic Context(s): Lower Peninsula/Cypress Swamp Zone; Urbanization and Early Suburbanization, 1880-1040+/-; Forestry theme; state forest property type.

Evaluation: The former Ellendale State Forest was among the first state forest tracts in Delaware, and its primary significance under Criterion A appears to be its association with the Depression-era public works program, the CCC. Unlike the Appenzellar Tract, the forest was not the site of experimental forestry practices, nor was it a demonstration forest with public signage. Current research suggests that the tract has been subjected to standard forestry practices, the

implementation of which does not confer historical significance from a National Register perspective.

Among the Forestry Department's initial plans for the land, however, was the erection of campsite facilities on the portion of the forest adjoining the DuPont Highway. This task was achieved using CCC labor, and the result was the extant picnic area on the east verge of U.S. 113 within the original parcel of the Ellendale State Forest. The historical significance of the picnic area (S-08151) has already been recognized, and it was listed on the National Register in 1991. According to Delaware Forest Service employees Erich Burkentine and Gerald (Junior) Webb, no other older buildings or structures exist within the forest, and other CCC-era improvements have been altered beyond recognition (Webb 2009). Roadways have been widened, and the ditch system has been improved and expanded. Most of the concrete monuments erected by the CCC to mark the boundaries of the forest have been destroyed or displaced. Very little historical fabric, other than some of the tree plantations themselves (e.g., Stands 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9), remains from the CCC period, and the tract, other than the picnic area, fails to convey important associations with this important period in American history. Therefore, this tract as a whole is recommended not eligible under National Register Criterion A.

Archival and secondary source research concerning the history of the forest tract has not revealed a connection to the productive life of any individual significant in the history of the locality, the area, or the state. Therefore, the Ellendale tract is recommended not eligible for the National Register under Criterion B.

National Register eligibility under Criterion C requires that a property possess architectural or design significance. The picnic facility (S-08151) at the north end of the tract is already listed on the National Register under Criterion C specifically for the uniquely rural character of its architecture. The forest lands of the tract do not contribute to the architectural significance of the picnic facility, and the current boundary is therefore adequate in JMA's opinion.

No older buildings or structures remain on the Ellendale Tract beyond the National Register boundaries of the picnic facility. The forest itself does not represent a designed landscape. Instead, trees were planted not to yield an aesthetic impression but in accordance with standard forestry practices of their times. Therefore, because the tract as a whole does not embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, does not represent the work of a master, and does not possess high artistic values, it is recommended not eligible for the National Register under Criterion C.

No evidence has come to light that would suggest that any elements of the plantings in the tract have the potential to yield significant information about historic forestry practices. Therefore, the tract is recommended as not eligible under Criterion D. The archeological potential of the tract is not considered in this evaluation.

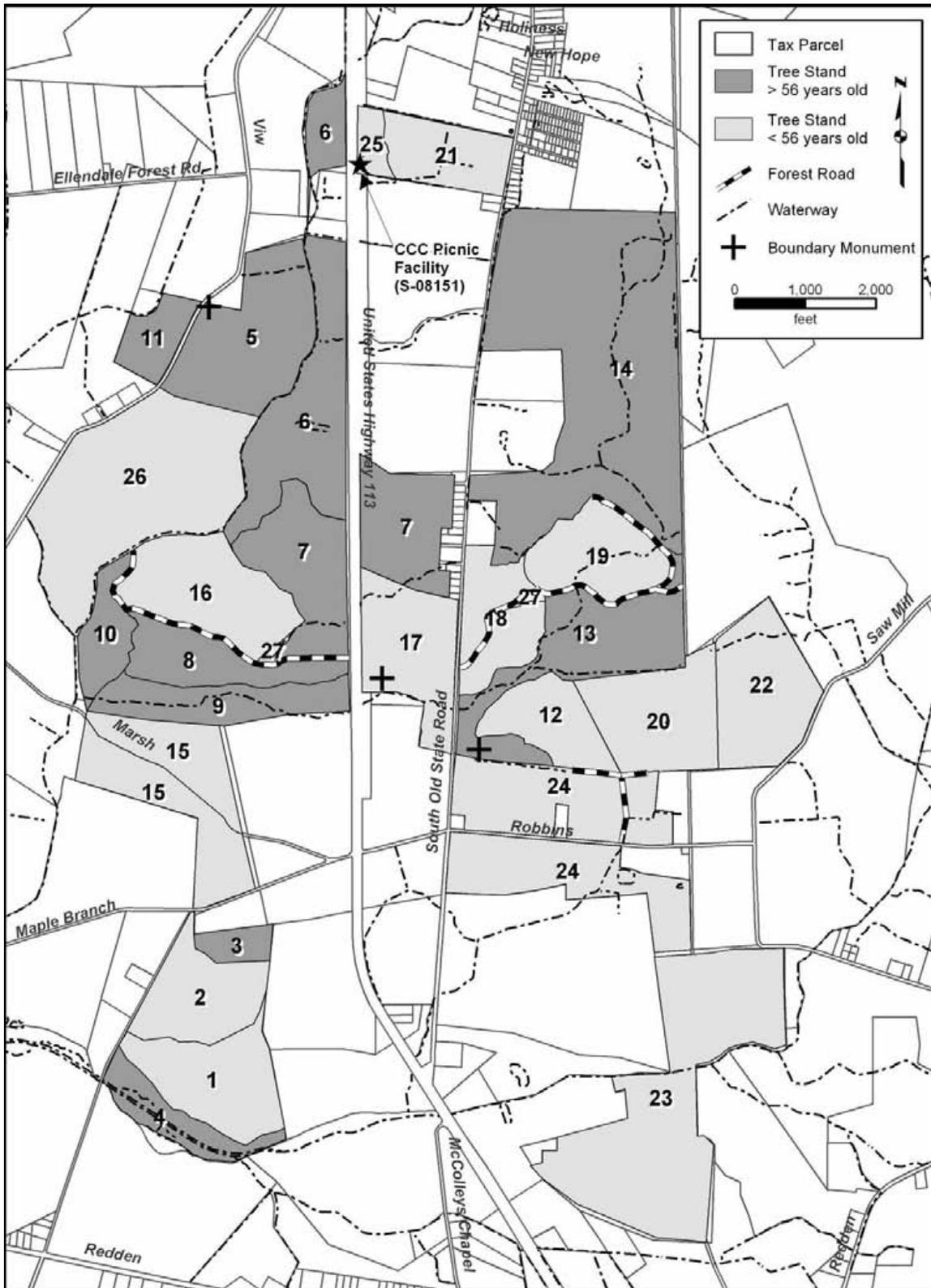
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Ellendale Tract, Stands 8 and 9 of mixed pine and hardwoods on the west side of U.S. 113, view to SW

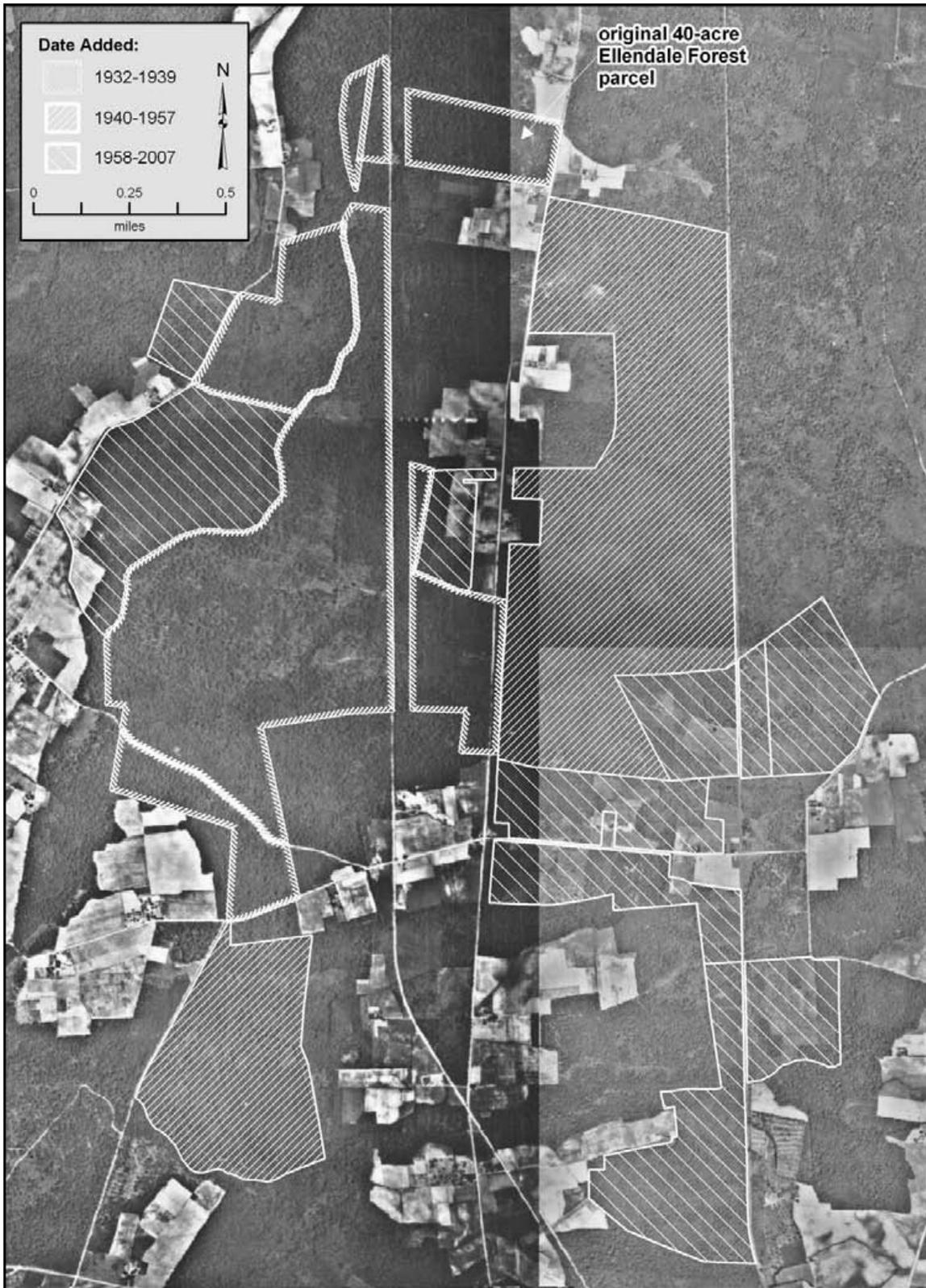


Ellendale Tract, Stand 6, a natural stand of mixed pines and hardwoods on the west side of U.S. 113, view to SW

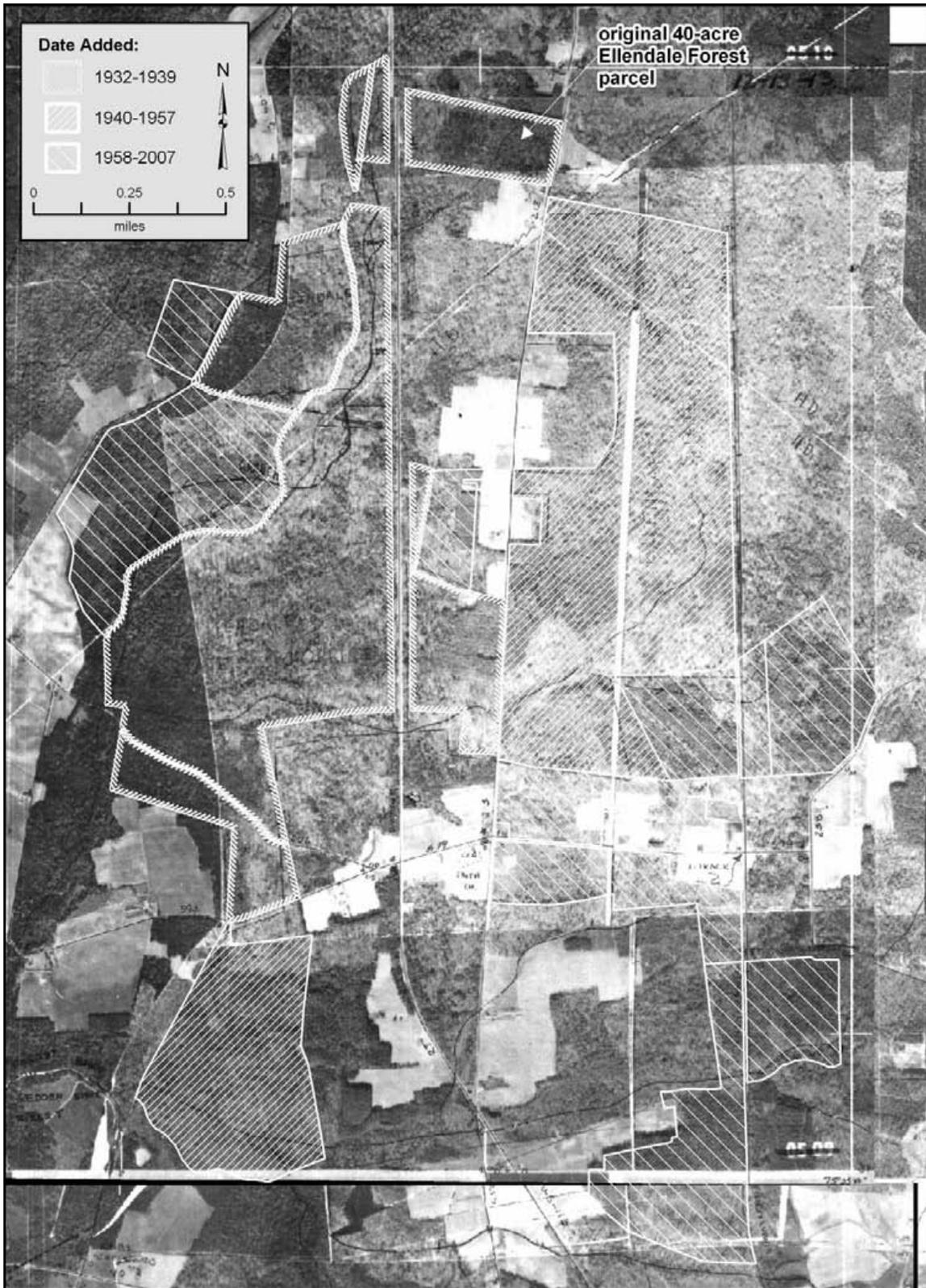




(2003 aerial)



(1937 aerial)



(1962 aerial)

**S-12179. ECW (Emergency Conservation Work) Camp S-53 Mess Hall,
Redden Road
(PIN: 135-5.00-37.00)
(Detail Map #5)**

Description: This property is located in the southeast corner of the intersection of Redden Road and McColley’s Chapel Road (County Road 213) and contains a fellowship hall and storage shed currently associated with McColley’s Chapel.

The fellowship hall—originally a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) mess hall—is a one-story, wood-framed c. 1934-1935 side-gabled building that faces north. A one-room shed-roof extension is located on the rear wall, slightly off center towards the east end. The building measures five bays wide by three bays deep with regular fenestration on all sides. A gabled entry porch extends from the center of the façade sheltering the main, double-door entrance, fronted by a modern handicap ramp trimmed in iron railing. Secondary, single-door entrances are located within both gable ends. The interior of the building is naturally lit by a combination of double-hung, one-over-one and casement wood-sash openings. The building is covered in asbestos shingles and rests on a concrete-block foundation. The roof is sheathed in metal. A concrete-block chimney rises from the exterior of the rear, southwest corner of the building.

The interior of this building consists of three rooms, a large dining area and kitchen (main block), and a storage closet (rear extension). All of the openings appear to be original, and are cased in stained, plain wood molding. The wall between the kitchen and dining area is multi-functional; folded down it can serve as a counter top for serving between the two rooms, or kept up it can function as a wall. The dining area is open, and currently contains portable chairs and tables, and a piano. All of the original built-in features (cabinets, sink, heating elements, and countertops) remain in the kitchen, with the exception of a newer refrigerator. A small bathroom has been built in a corner of the storage room, but otherwise the interior remains intact.

Nestled behind the fellowship hall, to the rear of its eastern end, is a small, wood-framed storage shed (.002). This one-story c. 1920s gabled-front building faces east. A single wood door opening pierces the center of its façade. Overall, the building is clad in vertical wood siding, and rests on concrete-block piers. Its roof is sheathed in metal.

Applicable Historic Context(s): Lower Peninsula/Cypress Swamp Zone; Urbanization and Early Suburbanization, 1880-1940+/-; Architecture, Engineering and Decorative Arts theme; CCC building property type.

Historic Overview: According to Reba Wells (2008), a neighbor and McColley’s Chapel congregant, the church’s fellowship hall, known as Redden Community Hall, originally served as a CCC barracks at a work camp to the south of Redden Road, approximately 1.5 miles further west of its current location. Historic-period aerial photographs indicate that the building was moved to McColley’s Chapel Road between 1954 and 1961.

The work camp from which the building came was ECW Camp S-53, located on the east side of Gravelly Branch within the Jester Tract of Redden State Forest (“ECW” stands for Emergency Conservation Work, and the “S” indicates that it is on a state forest). The first ECW forestry camp in Delaware, construction was started by the United States Army Corps of Engineers on 4 September 1934, and the site was occupied by the beginning of October. The original occupants were Company 2210, CCC war veterans transferred from an Army flood control project near

Montpelier, Vermont. In January, they were replaced by CCC junior Company 1293 from Camp Dix, New Jersey, and the camp was given its official designation of ECW Camp S-53 (Delaware State Forester 1936:12; Civilian Conservation Corps Legacy 2004; Page 2000).

Under the State Forestry Department's lead and administration, CCC camps throughout the state undertook a variety of projects, including mosquito control work along the marshes and inland bays, clearance and maintenance of drainage and flood control ditches, creation of wildlife refuges from wetlands, restoration of freshwater ponds, planting of new forests, blazing trails, and creating fire breaks (Meyer 2008). State forest work in Delaware began by establishing the boundaries of the 1,133-acre Jester Tract of the Redden State Forest. Property lines were brushed out, resurveyed, and blazed, and then marked at each corner with permanent concrete monuments. From 1934 to 1936, 7.6 miles of truck trails and 4.1 miles of horse trails were constructed, and bridges and culverts were also built (Delaware State Forester 1936:12-17).

The CCC workers lived in temporary camps that were built and administered by the Army under the auspices of the War Department. Each camp was staffed by a "company" of workers, usually numbering around 200 (O'Bannon and Henry 1986). The earliest CCC camps were composed of tents, which were soon replaced by permanent wooden buildings. Unlike the regional rustic style advocated for recreational buildings constructed using CCC labor, the camps that housed the workers usually consisted of standardized utilitarian buildings that mimicked military design (O'Bannon and Henry 1986). Camps typically consisted of approximately 24 buildings laid out in a rough "U"-shaped formation, around open space used for assemblies and sports activities. Wooden buildings were solidly constructed, usually of locally available wood, painted or stained, and often covered in creosote or tar paper. They were not easily dismantled once the camp had finished its work project. Sometimes they were turned over to a nearby community or sold at auction, but more often they were boarded up and left desolate. In 1934, in an effort to better allocate time and money and make buildings more portable, the army began designing buildings with interchangeable parts that could serve multiple uses (administrative, recreational, mess, or quarters). By 1936 this design became the standard for most camp buildings, which were mass produced and came in panels for easy construction. The exterior walls of this new construction type were painted or stained to prevent deterioration, and only the portions of the building subject to damage were treated with a preservative. This prefabricated portable variety was easy to dismantle at the end of a work project, and ready to be transported wherever a new camp was authorized (Salmond 1967; Paige 1985; Otis et al. 1986). Because the camps (and the buildings within them) were designed to be temporary, most were dismantled after the work for which they were built was finished. The mess hall, built c. 1934-1935, is thought to be an example of the later, more portable type.

ECW Camp S-53 was abandoned in July 1939, in part because Delaware had not appropriated funds for its operation (*Journal Every Evening* 1939). Four years later, towards the end of 1943, the lease the Department of Forestry had with the Army for the former camp expired. By that time there were five new Army-built structures at the camp, in addition to the older CCC buildings. The former CCC camp buildings, described as "numerous single story frame buildings," were put up for sale at a public auction scheduled for April 1, 1944 (*Sussex Countian* March 23, 1944), but the sale was postponed at the request of the Sussex County agricultural community (*Sussex Countian* April 6, 1944). Some of the structures, including two warehouses (since demolished) and the camp latrine (extant), were eventually moved to the State Forest ranger station in the Headquarters Tract on the east side of U.S. 113, and lease agreements were reached with private individuals to move seven of the structures to Staytonsville. The remainder were rehabilitated on site for use by "Western hemisphere agricultural labor" (Delaware State Forester 1944:8). All buildings had been removed from the site by 1954, as seen on an aerial

photograph from that year, but, aside from the fellowship hall at McColley's Chapel, their final disposition is not known

Although Ms. Wells—the McColley's Chapel congregant interviewed by JMA during the field survey—identified the building as a barracks, it is more likely to have been a mess hall. The revised identification is based on the presence of a large kitchen at the east end of the building, connected to the main room by a wood panel pass-through. An interior photograph of a CCC mess hall in Connecticut (reproduced below) reveals remarkable similarities to the fellowship hall at McColley's Chapel.

Evaluation: The fellowship hall, built as a mess hall for the ECW Camp S-53 down the road, is associated with the Depression-era development of the Redden State Forest (Page 2005). Although this is a pivotal chapter in the history of Delaware's state forests and in the shaping of the local community, the building is no longer in its original location, nor is it within a cluster of similar camp buildings. Standing on its own in a new location, the association between the former mess hall and important trends in history has been severed. The mess hall property is therefore recommended not eligible under Criterion A.

Limited research has not revealed a direct association between the property and any individuals significant in the history of the local community. The building was constructed as part of a program initiated by William Taber, then the state forester, and clearly an important figure in the developmental history of this part of Delaware. Taber's involvement in the property was administrative, however, and he neither designed, constructed, nor occupied the building. Therefore, the mess hall is recommended not eligible under National Register Criterion B.

The former mess hall is a rare surviving example of an intact CCC camp facility in Delaware. Although other types of CCC constructions such as picnic areas and other recreational facilities are extant in Delaware, the former mess hall is one of only three known or suspected CCC *camp* buildings in Sussex County. The two others are a latrine that was moved to the Headquarters Unit of the Redden State Forest from ECW Camp S-53 and a former barracks that now serves as the church hall at St. John's Methodist Church at Springfield Crossroads (at the southeast corner of the intersection of Springfield Road [Route 47] and Gravel Hill Road [Route 30]). The latter came from an unspecified CCC camp near Georgetown, but since there were two CCC camps near Georgetown, it is unknown if the barracks came from ECW Camp S-53 or the other camp (Company 3220 at D-2/SCS-2; Civilian Conservation Corps Legacy 2004). The former barracks at St. John's was found to be a non-contributing element of the National Register eligible church property (CRS #S-03300), but it was noted as potentially eligible under different historical contexts, including its association with the CCC camps (Davis 2008). An attempt was made to locate other former CCC buildings in the vicinity, but none could be found. Persons knowledgeable about two nearby buildings with similar massing were contacted, but both structures turned out to be later constructions (Ennis 2009; Kroeger 2009). The disposition of the seven ECW Camp S-53 buildings and structures supposedly moved to Staytonsville in the early 1940s is unknown.

Constructed in c. 1934-1935, the former mess hall at McColley's Chapel Road was a pre-fabricated, utilitarian building designed to support government-sponsored laborers. Its unelaborated rectangular form and wide-open floor plan reflect this use. A 1937 aerial photograph indicates that all of the buildings at ECW Camp S-53 had essentially the same footprint. Photographs (shown below) from the late 1930s of three of the camp's other buildings confirm this observation and suggest that the exterior design was highly standardized. Like most CCC camp buildings, the former mess hall was designed in the military style to be both utilitarian and

functionally flexible. Though moved to its current location between 1954 and 1961, the building has been altered very little. The cement-asbestos shingles are probably not original, and though they are consistent with the period of construction, they do not match the look of the wood siding known to have been used on other camp buildings (as seen in historic photographs). The windows and front doors are original, however, and the interior retains much of its original character. A small bathroom has been added to the rear ell, but the configuration has remained intact, as has all of the interior trim. As an example of a standardized CCC building in general and a mess hall in particular, this property is a rare survivor of a building type fast disappearing from the Sussex County landscape, and it is therefore recommended eligible for the National Register under Criterion C.

As a moved property, it must also meet the requirements of Criteria Consideration B. The mess hall is remarkably intact and arguably retains integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling, as stipulated under Criterion Consideration B. Further, the building is of a highly standardized design meant to be placed in a cleared landscape anywhere in the eastern United States; its setting is therefore not critical to its architectural significance. Its integrity of association has been somewhat compromised as it is no longer part of a work camp, but its setting in a clearing with a wooded backdrop and its communal, utilitarian function still evoke its historic association, at least from an architectural point of view.

The building on this property represents a common example of wood framing and is not likely to provide new information on this construction type that is not already available through other means; therefore the property is not likely to be eligible under Criterion D.

The proposed National Register boundary for the property consists of the present-day Sussex County tax parcel 135-5.00-37.00, encompassing the fellowship hall. The small shed (.002) behind the mess hall appears to have been built at least a decade before the mess hall, and there is no clear historical association between the two. The shed does not contribute to the architectural significance of the mess hall and is therefore a non-contributing element of the property.

S-12179



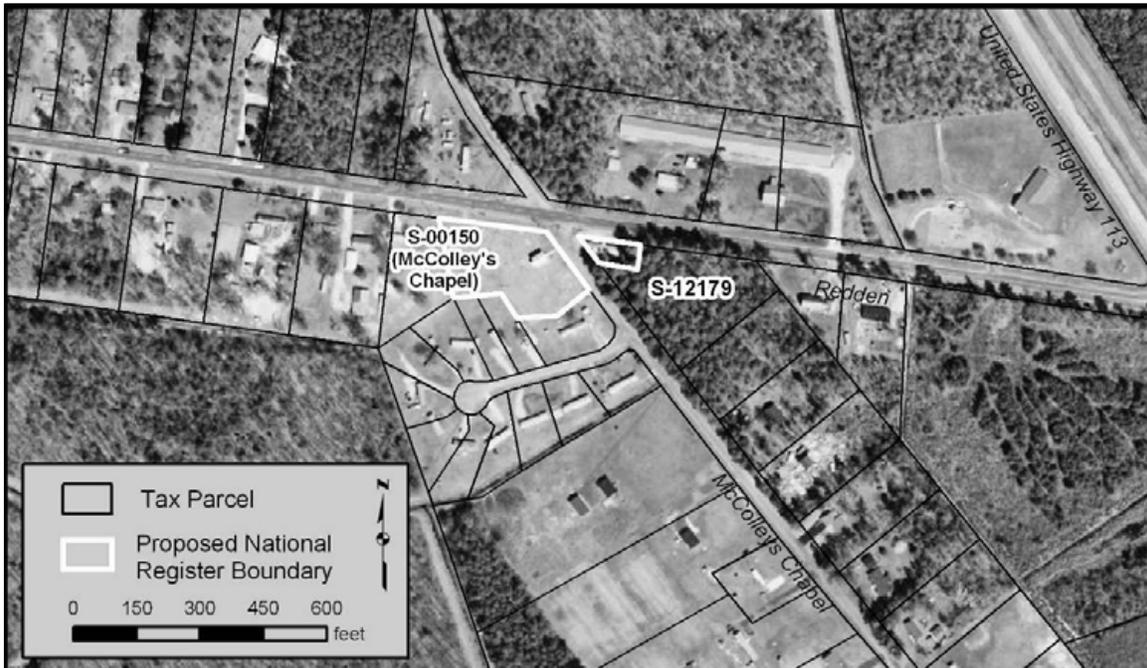
former CCC mess hall (.001) façade and east side, view to SSW



shed (.002), view to SW



interior of former CCC mess hall (.001), main room, view to E; the wooden panel in the center of the rear wall is a pass-through to a kitchen



ECW Camp S-53



Company 1293 at ECW Camp S-53 in 1936 (framed photograph at Redden State Forest Headquarters, Georgetown, DE)



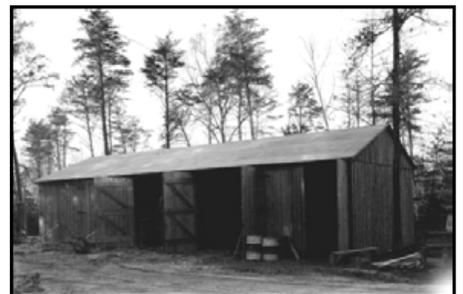
locations of ECW Camp S-53 and the former mess hall (S-12179) on the 1937 aerial photograph



multi-purpose building at ECW Camp S-53 (DSFD 1934:Collection CCC, Negative 258)



storage garage at ECW Camp S-53 (DSFD 1934:Collection CCC, Negative 259)



army garage at ECW Camp S-53 (DSFD 1934:Collection CCC, Negative 260)

CCC Buildings



Lake Placid CCC Camp S-71 in Essex, New York, 1935 (source: Civilian Conservation Corps Stories n.d.)



interior of mess hall at Cross CCC Camp S-51, Housatonic Meadows State Forest, West Cornwall, Connecticut; note pass-through to kitchen at end of main room (source: Civilian Conservation Corps Stories n.d.)



interior of barracks at Cross CCC Camp S-51, Housatonic Meadows State Forest, West Cornwall, Connecticut (source: Civilian Conservation Corps Stories n.d.)