

1933 Civilian Conservation Corps in Santa Susanna

Written by Joanie Price Brown, daughter of John E. Price



My father, John Edward Price was born in Chicago, Illinois in 1913. His Dutch values consisted of hard work and a quiet determination with a dry wit. He left his hometown of Aurora, Illinois and joined the Civilian Conservation Corps on October 13, 1933 where he worked on road construction and building. Conditioning and training took place at Fort Sheridan, Illinois. He told me he always felt bad that he couldn't serve his country in the war like his brothers, but I think he did serve his country building roads and digging ditches in the Santa Susanna CCC's. He worked on project #P 230, Co# 3330 during 1934-35. He left the CCC's because he obtained a job. I don't recall my dad ever being without a job. When he got laid off, he had another job within the same day as a tool and dye man.

John weighed in at 138 lbs. when he left Fort Sheridan CCC's. In addition to serving in the Simi Valley area (Santa Susanna) John served in Camp Heywood S-271 in Pierce, Idaho, in May 1934. His last paid day with the camp was May 9, 1934 where Navy Lieutenant, RM Gerth, honorably discharged him.

The following is from a taped interview I recorded of my daddy talking about his

CCC experience:

"I left for the CCC's in 1933 and came back in 1934, I was there 7 months. Well you got \$30.00 a month, and I sent \$25.00 home, got to keep \$5.00 and live a wild life. The Army ran it all and Navy and we had a retired Navy lieutenant in charge. We had regulations with calisthenics first thing at 6 am, breakfast, then off to work. We built firebreaks and roads with a pick and shovel mostly near Chatsworth. I lived in Illinois at the time, it was a big deal in the Roosevelt administration to provide help during the depression--the government works project. It was good healthy work and there wasn't anything else to do. Everybody gained an average of 7 lbs. I was in good shape, about 160 lbs. We worked with shorts on. I left in October from Illinois to sunny California. Weekends I used to hitchhike to Pasadena, LA. We wandered all over California. People would give us a ride. We wore the uniform. Trucks would take us every once in a while for something special like church. There wasn't much around Chatsworth then, mostly fruit trees, farmland, grape orchards and walnut groves. It was on Los Angeles Street in Santa Susana Pass area."

He told me, "I got a job in a furniture factory for \$20.00 a week. The refrigerator was \$110.00 and the stove was \$65.00 for a tabletop stove. My wife was working and she made \$14.00 a week about 48 hours a week." Later he told me, "When I moved to California on a Friday and had a job by Monday in 1951."



San Fernando, California. Hitch-hiking.

This Civilian Conservation Corps boy is returning to camp about thirty miles away after a weekend visit to his family in Los Angeles.

The **Conservation Corps State Museum** is located in four barracks buildings on the grounds of Camp San Luis Obispo. Opened in 1995, the museum exhibits the works of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in California. One building is a replica of a 1930s CCC barracks, including tools, uniforms and other artifacts. The museum is open by appointment. It contains the library and research center of the National Association of Civilian Conservation Corps Alumni Buildings.

A sample of what they accomplished:

Number of Trees Planted: Between 2 and 3 billion

State Parks Developed: 800

Public Campground Development: 52,000 acres

Miles of Roads Built: 125,000

Miles of Telephone Lines Strung: 89,000

Miles of Foot Trails Built: 13,100

Farmlands Benefited from Erosion Control Projects: 40 million acres

Stream and Lake Bank Protection: 154 million square yards

Range Re-vegetation: 814,000 acres

Fire fighting Days: More than 8 million

NOTE: According to Al Knight, Anthropologist and expert on the Simi Hills, the CCC built the road known as Black Canyon Rd., from the Sage ranch north to Simi.