

**Civilian Conservation Corp
Clanton Camp ClanChilAla
Company 3481
SCS-7
By Derric Scott**

From newspaper research and other sources.

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Clanton CCC Camp ClanChilAla

By Derric Scott

Camp ClanChilAla



The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was a program of the "New Deal" of President Franklin Roosevelt. It was organized in April of 1933 and designed to give jobs and training to the unemployed young single men during the Great Depression. Originally the ages were 18-25 and then later expanded to 17-28. The men were paid \$30 a month (\$25 of which was sent home to their families) and were provided a place to sleep, clothing, meals, and medical care. They were employed in construction, agriculture, firefighting, tree planting, soil conservation, and flood control. Each camp was committed to one of these specific areas.

In Alabama, CCC labor built state parks, like DeSoto, the rock tower on Flagg Mountain, Coosa County (which was to be the center of a new state park atop the mountain), and Monte Sano. The Clanton camp targeted soil conservation and erosion control. The camp was assigned to the "Soil Erosion Service/Soil Conservation Service" (SES/SCS). The SCS was later known as the Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS).

Note: The CCC had soil erosion camps (like the one in Clanton) that were under the general administration of the Soil Erosion Service (SES). When the Soil Conservation Act was passed in April 1935 the newly renamed Soil Conservation Service (SCS) took over the soil erosion camps and significantly increased the work in soil and water conservation.

The Clanton "ClanChilAla" Camp

The Clanton CCC Camp was the 3481st Company CCC, Camp ClanChilAla, SES / SCS-7, Clanton, Alabama. It was located on the north side of Highway 22, roughly between 16th and 17th Streets North, west of Clanton. It was first occupied August 8th, 1935. The camp included barracks, mess hall, vehicle storage and maintenance buildings, administrative building, craft shop, sport facilities, reading room, and other support buildings.



**Modern view
with superimposed 1942 aerial
(1942 and 1958 site aerials to the left)**



Modern view of probable entrance to Camp ClanChilAla on 4th Ave. N. (Hwy 22). (Curb opening may be original entrance?)

Clanton CCC Camp ClanChilAla



ClanChilAla – Front view, ca 1936, source Thomas Horton Walker Collection.



ClanChilAla – view west, from fence, source Heritage of Chilton.



ClanChilAla, view west from rooftop, source Spencer & Wyckoff, US Government, Ann Langston Collection.



ClanChilAla, view east from rooftop, source Spencer & Wyckoff, US Government, Ann Langston Collection.

Soil Conservation

"Soil conservation" was the primary purpose of ClanChilAla, so they built a lot of terraces, ponds, drainage ditches, planted trees, etc. Unfortunately for us today, they also raised and planted hundreds of thousands of Kudzu plants at their farm station outside Thorsby! Farmers would apply for them to work on their farm to help prevent erosion, which was literally washing away the topsoil at the time (in 1938 there were 114 coop agreements covering 11,458 acres). Kudzu, terraces, and other erosion control methods that they practiced may have saved the area from washing into the Gulf of Mexico! (This was about the same time that the "dust bowl" was literally creating a desert from our farmlands in the mid-west due to agricultural ignorance, land misuse, and drought. This was also only a few years after the devastating floods of 1929 which washed tons of topsoil into the gulf (it was said at one point that about two thirds of Alabama was under water)).



1937 photo of former cotton field in Chilton Co. Ala. from Farm Security Admin/Office of War Info, LOC.



CCC Facility near Thorsby, built after 1938, later Thorsby Seed Stocks Farm, source Thorsby, Our Roots – Our Fruits.

Most of the staff and participants were from outside the county. The original staff physician was Dr. William C. Golden. After the CCC disbanded, Dr. Golden stayed in Clanton and was a very popular physician.

Many people tried to make the CCC a permanent program, however, when World War II began the U S Army had plenty of jobs for these men! The program was unfunded after 1942 and was spun down. Ownership and control of the resources of the program in Clanton were transferred the Selective Service in September 1942. The Selective Service relinquished control in 1944 and it was transferred to the US Army when site was used as a POW camp late in WWII (more below). It was closed for good on September 11, 1945. Much of the camp was shipped to Craig Field (near Selma, later Craig Air Force Base). It is said that some of the structures were sold off by the U. S. Government and used by local people as the main parts of their homes and other buildings.

Details from Reports

A report (in the PDFs below) in 1935 lists

- recreational equipment of a baseball field and equipment (balls, catcher's gear, gloves, score book, bases, etc.),
- an outdoor basketball court and gear
- outdoor volleyball court and gear and
- Philco radio
- ping pong table and
- boxing ring with ropes, light, gong, gloves, etc.
- other lists have pool table, shuffle board, checkers, horseshoes, etc.

Wood shop was said to be the best in the district and included

- motor driven lathe
- band saw
- jig saw
- table saw
- shaper
- two sets of hand tools.

It describes items the woodworking class made, such as tables, chairs, the ping pong table, etc.

Education

The early Educational Advisor was Major Thomas Horton Walker, mentioned below. At one point the camp subscribed to 43 magazines, had 3 classrooms, and five blackboards.

A report from 1935 lists Educational activities including

- woodwork
- typing
- leadership
- elementary English
- elementary arithmetic
- first aid
- poultry raising and
- safety

The *CCC Camp Educational Report* from September 7, 1938 says **"During the past year we had two boys to learn to write. During this period we observed the improvement of writing and reading capacity of all in the Three R's, a class of special attention. We find that they are gaining a great deal in their work. During this period we have had one boy that got leave, before it was changed, and finished High School, one boy made another grade in High School by this method."**

The *CCC Camp Educational Report* from September 18, 1939 says **"No one in camp that is not able to read and write."**

The *CCC Camp Educational Report* from October 24, 1941 says **"Educational work in this camp has largely eliminated illiteracy among the enrollees and has provided a great deal of vocational training for them."**

Camp Educational Report, 8/29/1938, page 68 of 138, was signed by **Ervin Dailey** ACEA.

There were also regular religious services including a Catholic Priest about once a month and local Protestant ministers about once a week.

The *Work Project Report*, October 24, 1941, lists the outline of projects and work:

"The camp started as part time nursery camp. In the first five years of operation the camp worked on Government agreements on 219 private farms, doing pasture clearing, tree and shrub planting, kudzu planting, fence building, TSI work, contour furrowing pasture, sprigging pasture and excavating and controlling terrace outlets. All work was completed. Early in 1940 the camp was changed to a nursery camp entirely. Work is under the nursery staff supervising and consists of growing nursery plants for Soil Conservation Service use."

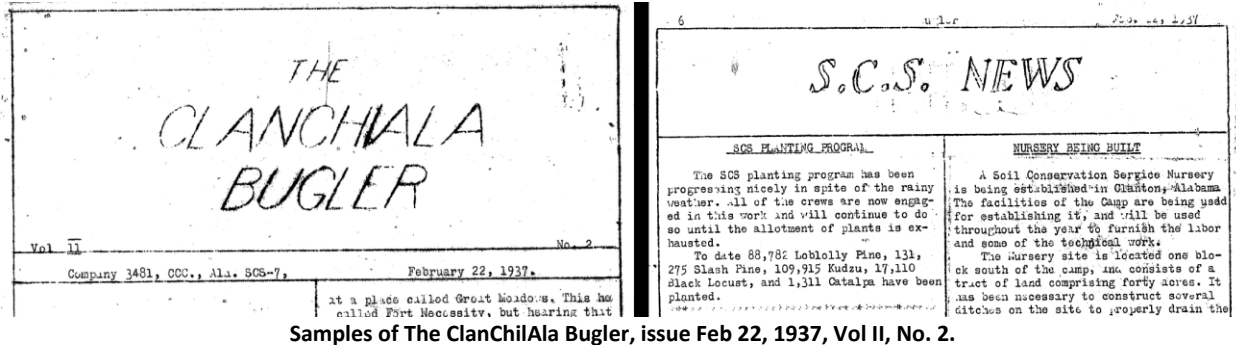
Also, many detailed reports of the nursery are at the Atlanta NARA facility, including lists of how many kudzu crowns the raised and produced. The nursery area was not in the camp and was just southwest of Thorsby.

The *Camp Inspection Report* (PDF below, page 6) from June 23, 1942 say "This camp is assigned to SCS Nursery, and work on farms is obligated only as Nursery Manager has no need for the labor. The Nursery labor load varies seasonally and with weather conditions, but will use 75 to 80% of a full strength company during the year."

A report received September 7, 1938 says "The working area is the entire county of Chilton - 462,000 acres. 114 cooperative agreements are held, covering 11,458 acres. About 75% of the work, however, is confined to the Soil Conservation Service Nursery, embracing an area of 160 acres."

The ClanChilAla Bugler Newsletter (ClanChilAla)

The CCC Camps sometimes published newsletters. The Clanton Camp published the ClanChilAla Bugler at least from February 12, 1936 to at least February 22, 1937 and it was around 8 pages (the one issue found was digitized by the Center for Research Libraries).



Samples of The ClanChilAla Bugler, issue Feb 22, 1937, Vol II, No. 2.

This newsletter reports in the SCS News section that "The SCS planting program has been progressing nicely in spite of rainy weather. All of the crews are now engaged in this work and will continue to do so until the allotment of plants is exhausted. To date 88,782 Loblolly Pine, 131,275 Slash Pine, 109,915 Kudzu, 17,100 Black Locust, and 1,311 Catalpa have been planted.

Personnel and Local Business

See Appendix I for some lists of Camp ClanChilAla's personnel.

List of some businesses on accounts payable sheet from October 1937

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| • E Johnson | • Excess Ice |
| • B F Raspberry | • Clanton Motor Co. |
| • Arthur Gore | • Happy Days |
| • Joe Robinson | • Cooper Lumber Co. |
| • S E Mims | • Jones Seed & Feed Co. |
| • M R Lancaster | • V J Elmore Stores |
| • H S Shaw | • Murray-Bell Hardware Co. |
| • Clanton Wholesale Gro Co. | • Mahan Cabinet Shop |

Photographs

Below are a few pictures of the Clanton/Chilton CCC Camp in the 1930s from various sources. Most of these images will open in a new tab or window.

The first are from the collection of Major Thomas Horton Walker. He was a teacher and coach at Chilton County High School and by virtue of his being an officer in the Reserves, he was "called up" to work in the CCC about 1933. He worked at several of the CCC camps in Alabama and Mississippi and came back to the Clanton camp as Educational Adviser for five years, until 1941. When WWII started, he and many others joined the war effort and the CCC was slowly disbanded.

From the Thomas Horton Walker collection:



From "Heritage of Chilton County:"



From Advertiser "Images of Chilton County:"



From "Thorsby, Our Roots, Our Fruits:"



From Ann Langston collection, US Government by Spencer & Wyckoff:

			
Barracks	Mess Hall	Reading Room	
			
Wood Working	Griffin, Brock, Golden	Panarama 1	Panarama 2

POW Camp

Late in World War II, when other Allied prison camps were filling up, the Clanton CCC camp was converted into a POW camp for a few hundred German soldiers. Clanton's camp was a subsidiary adjunct to the POW camp at Ft. McClellan and under the general supervision of Maxwell Field. Most of the prisoners in the Clanton camp were said to be from Rommel's Afrika Corp. Other Alabama POW camps were Camp Aliceville, (the largest in the Southeast holding from 3000 to 6000 German prisoners), Camp Opelika, Camp Sibert (near Gadsden), Ft. McClellan, and Ft. Rucker.

It is said that each Wednesday the prisoners were marched down to the "old" Wadesonian to watch a movie. Another story is that one of the county residents at the time, who was originally from Germany

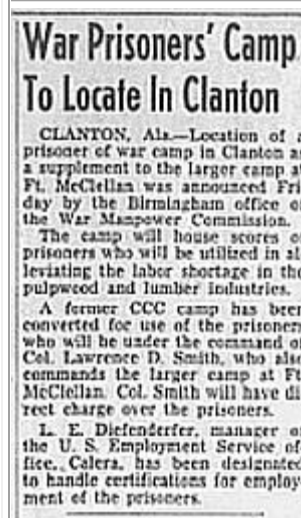
(or northern Italy), would visit and converse through the fence with the prisoners in German.

There are not too many articles to be found on the POW camp, however a few were:

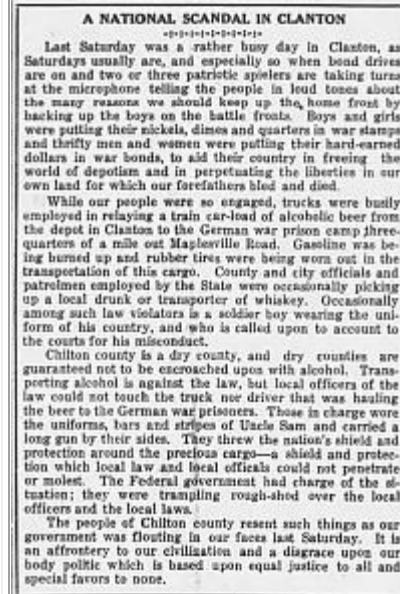
An [article on June 1, 1944 in the Union Banner](#) says that the first 220 German prisoners had just been brought in (Saturday, May 27th) and it was mentioned that they might be working pulpwood for Mr. Otto Jones, on the farm of Dr. W. L. Parrish, and at Stapp's Dairy. Many folks remember the German prisoners working on the sides of the roads or in the local farmers' fields.




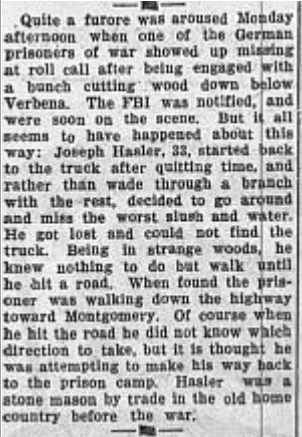
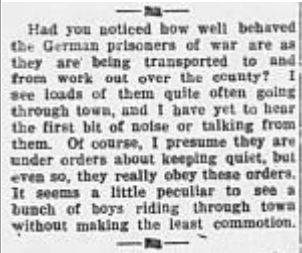
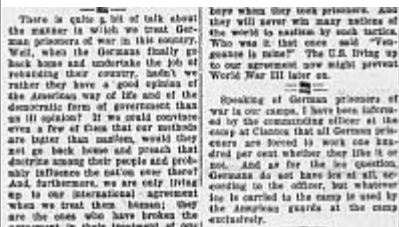
An article in the Birmingham News the next day also mentions the Clanton CCC camp being used as a POW camp, saying it was a supplement to the large camp at Ft. McClellan. The commander was Col. Lawrence D. Smith and L. E. Diefenderfer of Calera was to handle the employment of the prisoners.



There is soon a *SCANDAL* as the Federal government Military organizations supply the camp with beer as part of their rations.



Another article, a year later, on July 5, 1945 in the Union Banner mentions that there are now 206

<p>POWs in the camp.</p>	
<p>Excitement generated when a prisoner is lost (June 15, 1944)!</p>	
<p>Union Banner editor talks about the behavior of the POWs (August 24, 1944)</p>	
<p>Union Banner editor talks about the POWs (June 21, 1945).</p>	

References

Below is a list of references of the Clanton CCC camp:

- The Heritage of Chilton County, article/picture, pages 109-110.
- The Heritage of Chilton County, reference to Union Banner mention, page 9.
- The Heritage of Chilton County, description of house from it, page 33.
- Union Banner, 6/1/1944, mention of first 220 prisoners arriving.
- Union Banner, 7/5/1945, mention of 206 prisoners.
- Images of Chilton County, by The Clanton Advertiser, picture, page 13.
- Thorsby, Our Roots, Our Fruits, "Seed Stocks Farm" story/CCC picture, pages 36-38.
- Private pictures in the collection of Major Thomas Horton Walker and memoir.
- Private pictures from Ann Langston.

National Archives Documents on CCCCC

Below are three PDFs I paid for the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) to copy and send to me. The first is described as

"a 7 page Camp Survey done by the Army Corps of Engineers. It does list the camp buildings, their dimensions, and the material out of which they were constructed. None of the building listed exactly match the dimensions you have, but it may still be of use."

The second one is described as

"a 15 page Camp Liquidation Report. It also has a list of camp buildings and their dimensions. Again, none match exactly what you have, but it might be of use."

And finally the last one and is described as

"a 135 page file of Camp Inspection Reports for the camps. These reports are about the camp itself and include things like sample menus and information about the educational program and sanitary and safety conditions. It also has the names of the Company Commander and his staff along with the Camp Superintendent (who oversaw the projects) and his staff."

Records in Atlanta NARA

Also from NARA: **"There may be project records in Record Group (RG) 114, Records of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The NRCS was formerly known as the Soil Erosion Service/Soil Conservation Service (SES/SCS). The project records for camps in Alabama should be in our regional archive in Atlanta, Georgia. For more about Atlanta, please see: <http://www.archives.gov/atlanta/> Their e-mail address is: atlanta.archives@nara.gov."**

Appendix I

Lists of personnel of the ClanChilAla CCC Camp

Dec 21 1935		
Commander	Hobart M. Brock	1st Lt 355th Eng G S Regt
	Richard A. Griffin, Jr.	1st Lt 422nd Inf
Project Super	James H. Woods	
Doctor	William C. Golden	1st Lt MCR 348th Inf
5000 acres		

Nov 27 1936		
Commander	L. W. Graham	1st Lt 324th Inf
	Richard A. Griffin, Jr.	1st Lt 422nd Inf
Project Super	James H. Woods	
Doctor	William C. Golden	1st Lt MCR 348th Inf
Educational Adviser	Thomas H. Walker	CEA
10000 acres		

1937		
Commander	L. W. Graham	1st Lt 324th Inf
Commander	Harry C. Parham	1st Lt 39th Inf Res
Commander	Isaac G. Shier	1st Lt HQ & Hq Co Fla Sector SCF
Commander	Raymond E. Ford	Captain 328th Inf Res
Doctor	William C. Golden	1st Lt MCR 348th Inf
Doctor	James M. Campbell	1st Lt Med 4th Med Regt
Jr Officer	Guy L Arbuthnot, Jr	1st Lt 347th Inf Res
Jr Officer	Pierre H Leblanc, Jr	1st Lt QM REs A&SAG
Jr Officer	Ernest L Blanchard	1st Lt 347th Inf Res
Jr Officer	Mark A Jackson	2nd Lt Inf Res, CASC Benning
Jr Officer	Paul J Brown	2nd Lt 327th Inf Res
Jr Officer	Ellis P Sylvester	Captain Inf Res, CASC Beauregard
Jr Admin Asst	James H. Wood	
Engineering Aide	Henry T Stanley	
Jr Agronomist	Aubrey W Denney	
Engineering Aide	Willie Roe Tamplin	
Sr Foreman	William Ellis	

Clanton CCC Camp ClanChilAla

Sr Foreman	Carey E Haigler	
Sr Foreman	Robinett T Jones	
Sr Foreman	Ernest McGhee	
Camp Mechanic	John R Brown	
Jr Asst to Tech	Underwood Shultz	
Camp Assistant	Eurell E Dobbs	
Camp Assistant	Rasmond C Sammons	
Camp Assistant	Willie G Teal	
Camp Assistant	Charlie White	

Aug / Sep 1938		
Commander	J W Johnson	1st Lt Inf Res
Subordinate	C L R Powell	1st FA Res
Project Super	James H. Wood	
Doctor	George A McCook	1st Lt Med Res
Camp Soil Conserv.	Aubrey W Denney	
Camp Engineer	Henry T Stanley	
Camp Agronomist	Willie Roe Tamplin	
Foreman	William Ellis	
Foreman	Carey E Haigler	
Foreman	Robinett T Jones	
Foreman	Ernest McGhee	
Camp Mechanic	Ed. Roy Boman	
Jr Asst to Tech	Underwood Shultz	

1939		
Asst Ed Adviser	William Adams	
Camp Super	James H Wood	
Camp Engineer	Henry T Stanley	
Camp Agronomist	Aubrey W Denney	
Camp Forester	John B Carlton	
Foreman	Ernest McGhee	
Foreman	Carey E Haigler	
Foreman	William Ellis	
Camp Mechanic	Ed. Roy Boman	
Foreman	Robert W Williamson	

Jr Asst to Tech	Underwood Shultz
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Nov 1940	
Contract Surgeon	Morris Fogel
Jr Admin Asst	James H Wood
Jr Soil Conserv.	Aubrey W Denney
Jr Soil Conserv.	Robert W Gandy, Jr.
Jr Soil Conserv.	Kermit N Tucker
Jr Asst to Tech	Underwood Shultz
Sr Foreman	Ernest McGhee
Sr Foreman	Carey E Haigler
Sr Foreman	R W Williamson
Sr Foreman	William Ellis
Camp Mechanic	Ed. Roy Boman

Oct 24, 1941		
Commander	John W Baugh	1st Lt
Subordinate	Robert R Taylor, Jr.	Former member
Contract Surgeon	William C Golden	
Camp Super	James H Wood	
Jr Soil Conserv.	Aubrey W Denney	
Jr Soil Conserv.	Kermit N Tucker	
Sr Foreman	Robert W Williamson	
Sr Foreman	Carey E Haigler	
Sr Foreman	William Ellis	
Sr Foreman	William P Champion	
Auto Mechanic	John F Sheppard	
Minor Asst Tech	John F Reaves	

Jun 23, 1942	
Commander	James E Skelton
Subordinate	Robert R Taylor, Jr.
Contract Surgeon	J T Tidwell
Camp Super	Brooks Connell
Jr Soil Conserv.	Aubrey W Denney
Conserv. Aid	Fred O Fields

Conserv. Aid	Benjamin P Hollis	
Conserv. Aid	Robert W Williamson	
Auto Mechanic	Eugene A Coker	