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Picnic Place and Mountain Drives Feature Peru Forest

Lookout Tower Will Cap Garnet Peak, 2200-Foot Crown of State Reservation—1500-Acre Acquisition and Development of Game Preserve With Three Big Ponds Considered.

One of the loveliest little picnic grounds made by CCC workers in all of Berkshire County's many thousand acres of State forest and park land is at Peru, right beside the macadam road between Hinsdale and Middlefield. Three thousand persons visited the charming little spot last year and this year's use of the area has started proportionately larger, with several large groups holding outings there.

Two tiny ponds feature the area, fed by a sparkling meadow brook that dips into the little grove of stately hemlocks. Very little landscaping has been done, only clearing of undergrowth and lower tree branches and a general cleaning up of the grounds. Thus the natural beauty of the little woods is retained and improved upon.

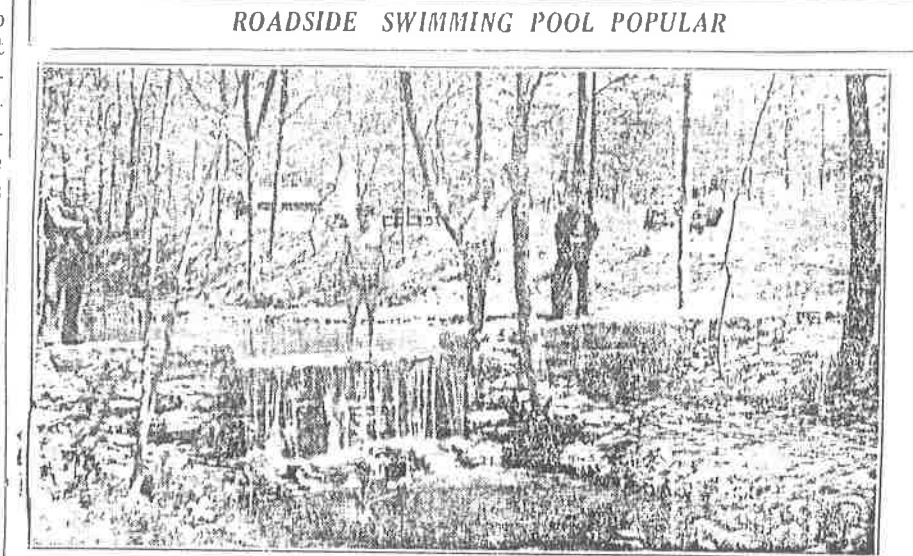
Accommodations Comfortable

Sturdy picnic tables and benches have been provided and still additional ones are ordered. Several of the simple but efficient little stone fireplaces for outdoor cooking have been built near the brook. Iron grating, fixed in the stones makes broiling easy. Generous stacks of wood cut the right length are four beside the fireplaces.

Larger of the two ponds is the upper one, built first. This has an attractive 30-foot cascade stone dam. The boulders used in constructing the dam were arranged in tumbled form so that the water splashes over it like a brook cascade. The pond has sandy bottom and boiler and is an excellent swimming pool. Unfortunately, it must serve as the camp's water supply for the present, so swimming is not allowed. Ultimately, however, it is thought that a well may be sunk to supply the camp, and the pond restored for full use by recreation seekers. It is just big enough for 10 or 12 to use.

The lower pond was built specifically for swimming when it was learned that the upper one would not be available. The lower pond is smaller and quite shallow except at the dam. The latter is of stone, arranged simply but stoutly. This pond, too, has a sandy bottom and benches.

The upper pond was well stocked with trout and would have been opened for fly-fishing this summer



Motoring and picnicking parties find their friends at this attractive spot.

but for the decision to use the pond temporarily for water supply. When this became known the clean-out gate was opened and the trout allowed to go downstream into the brook outside the State's property. Consequently the brook has provided extraordinarily good fishing this summer.

Roads, Forest Developed

All the other work on the reservation has consisted of road-building and forestry work. About two miles of excellent rock-base, gravel road has been constructed on the mountainside north of the Middlefield Road, where all the State's 2000 acres of mountain and plateau land lies. Several additional miles of road are planned, including three branches off the present route, all connecting with scenic Lafayette macadam motoring trail through Peru village to Worthington and Huntington. Also, an additional mile of new road will be constructed on the south side of the mountain, off Middlefield Road, circling the top of Garnet peak, the 2200-foot highest eminence on the reservation and joining the present road on the northwest side of the mountain.

The roads, besides providing additional scenic drives, also are desirable from the standpoint of fire protection. Many water holes for this purpose are plotted throughout the reservation, although no work has been done on these as yet.

Lookout Tower

A lookout tower will be built on Garnet Peak. From this point, adjacent to the site of the proposed new unit of the ultimate circuous drive, a complete panorama stretches scores of miles in every direction. The view to the west includes the Taconic Range and as far as the Catskills. To the east one can see points as far as Worcester.

Plantings include about 100,000 young trees. These were spot-planted, augmenting plantings already made several years ago. A

large area of the forest has been improved by thinning, weeding out deadwood and underbrush and other forestry practices. The forest has but little coniferous growth. Valuable hardwood stands cover large parts of the tract. Disease control work has been important. Fifty of the men in the Peru camp, or one-quarter the total number, comprise a travelling gypsy moth extermination crew, equipped with spray and other facilities. They have done yeoman service in the woods of Middlefield, Chester, Becket, Washington and other nearby towns. Blister rust control has been another project, but within the forest.

Game Preserve Talked

All the work done in the present forest will be insignificant compared with what is planned in a tentative program suggested by Superintendent Robert W. Browning.

This plan involves buying 1500 acres on the south side of Middlefield Road. In this area are three dried-up pond beds, Goose Pond, Jasenti Pond and Factory Pond. The whole area is drained by Factory Brook. There is valuable timber on the land in discussion and the whole area is an important potential public game preserve.

Under Mr. Browning's plan the three former ponds would be restored, representing a very worthwhile further contribution to the State's recreational facilities in the county. Factory Brook is an excellent trout stream and the three potential ponds could be well stocked with fish for the public to enjoy forever.

All this would fit in nicely with the general character of the Peru forest, which is not being developed intensively as a park area but as a forested property. The present holdings, as well as the proposed area are thoroughly adapted to wild life. Mr. Browning and State game management officials have discuss-

ed the possibilities of a game program there similar to the pioneer endeavor at Savoy State Forest. Acquisition of the desired additional tract of land would multiply the possibilities.

Factory Brook is fed by more than 20 tributary streams. It runs down through a rich valley from Peru to Barcroft village between Middlefield and Becket. Factory Pond's bed probably is 125 acres, Jasenti Pond 5 acres and Goose Pond about 10 acres.

Expensive Dam Required

One expensive piece of work would be required, the damming of Factory Pond that broke its dam in the Chester flood of 1890 and never has been rebuilt. The pond would require a heavy concrete core with stone masonry and earth fill, costing perhaps \$30,000.

This project might prove prohibitive. If so, Factory Pond might be eliminated and land farther north acquired to go with Goose and Jasenti Ponds and adjacent territory. The whole mountain valley section is excellent game country.

Everything future about the Peru Forest development is hanging fire for the present. Several plans are discussed. One is to eliminate the CCC camp altogether, calling the development a completed job for the present. Another is to make the camp a regional automobile truck repair depot. Still others call for use of the camp as a base for travelling crews such as the disease control gang. Again, the camp may be retained and extensive further work done. Nobody knows. This would seem wise, because facilities for public use on the property are still meagre compared with the other State forests in the county. Moreover, while possibilities are limited there are just as large prospects for development there as in some other forests where much more work is being done.