

# Pickett State Park & Museum

## Pickett State Park – Civilian Conservation Corps Museum



Pickett State Park, a short drive from Dale Hollow Lake, recently opened their historic Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Museum on Labor Day Weekend 2010 in conjunction with their popular thirty-six year old, Old-Timer's Day. The opening of the CCC Camp Museum showcases the works of many brave men, 70,000 Tennesseans, who left their families during the years of 1933 – 1942 to provide

for them under the auspices of President Roosevelt's New Deal initiated after the stock market crash of the Great Depression. The first CCC camp was established in May 1933 at Camp Cordell Hull in Unicoi County with Company 1455 occupying that site. Pickett State Park was one of the first state parks built, by CCC Camp 1471 and Camp 477. Hundreds of men started their day at 8:00 AM sharp. They shared some of the same rigorous duties and routines as those in the military, such as shining their shoes, making their beds, wearing CCC uniforms and learning to follow orders. The men would earn approximately \$30 dollars a month, of which \$25 dollars went home to their families. This provided families with money and stability in an unstable environment following the Great Depression. Mr. Oscar Odum, one of the surviving CCC enrollees from Company 447, was present at the Pickett CCC Museum during the opening sharing fond memories of this time in his life. Mr. Odum recalled that his father worked at General Motors/Delphi during the 1920's and after the stock market crash, lost his job. Not being able to find work in Dayton, Ohio, he sent his family back to the countryside of Gainesboro, in Jackson County, TN. With an old packed 1927 car the family traveled for two days down Hwy. 70 which was then a bumpy dirt road. Mr. Odum stayed with Company 447 for about three and a half years before going over to fight for our country in Japan during World War II. Most of the CCC workers went straight from these camps across the country to serve in World War II. The CCC Camps prepared these young men to get along with others of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, plus

it also taught them discipline and perseverance. Mr. Odum is close to 93 years of age now - Born in 1917. He believes that this shaped his life and gave him a solid foothold for his future. He wishes that the young adults of today that are struggling had this same opportunity to provide, learn and better themselves during our uncertain times. Mr. Odum learned the trade of a stone mason at the CCC Camp. He later used these skills when asked to build the Wright Brothers Memorial in 1940 alongside four other craftsmen. During that dedication, Mr. Odum personally got to meet Orville Wright. He proudly displays his affection for the efforts of the Pickett State Park Manager, Alan Wasik, and his rangers to preserve the CCC story which is a piece of history from a volatile time in America's story. The stone masonry trade that he learned at the CCC Camp came naturally to him and would serve him throughout his career after returning from the war. Stone masonry was one of the most prominent trades at Pickett State Park with the entrance, the visitor center and now the museum built using limestone and sandstone from the local area. These structures blend in beautifully with the lush forests, amazing trails and recreation available to the day and weekend visitor. Pickett State Park is open year round. It provides excellent cabin lodging, RV and camp sites, as well as wonderful trails for hiking, walking and many other outdoor recreational activities. Visit their website for up-to-date information, event calendar and availability, [www.tn.gov/environment/parks/Pickett](http://www.tn.gov/environment/parks/Pickett) or call 931-879-5821, or toll free 877-260-0010 (cabin reservation line).

