

Rabideau Civilian Conservation Corps Camp,
Mess Hall (Building No. 8)
County Road 39
Blackduck Vicinity
Beltrami County
Minnesota

HABS No. MN-147-G

HABS
MINN
4-BLADU.V,
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Denver, Colorado 80225-0287

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

RABIDEAU CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS CAMP,
MESS HALL
(BUILDING NO. 8)

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Location: One-half mile west of Beltrami County Highway 39, six miles south of Blackduck, Beltrami County, Minnesota.

Significance: Originally constructed about 1938 to serve as a barracks for the Rabideau Civilian Conservation Corps Camp, this building was later reconstructed as a Mess Hall for a summer field school operated by the University of Illinois from 1946 to 1972.

Description: The Mess Hall is a one-story, T-shaped, frame building located on a hillside at the northern edge of the camp. It includes a 20' x 86' dining hall with an irregular-plan kitchen wing on the south. The building is covered with shiplap siding painted dark green and is capped with a low-pitch, trussed, cross-gable roof covered with green rolled asphalt. A gable-roofed ridge ventilator projects from the kitchen roof. The dining hall includes a central entrance door on the north facade and doors on each end wall, although stairways are no longer in place to descend to the ground. Paired six-lite sash are located in each gable end, while nineteen nine-lite casement sash are spaced along the facades. The sash are somewhat smaller than those found in other buildings at the camp. The kitchen wing includes an entrance door to the south, paired nine-lite sash on the west facades, and 5 sash on the southeast facades. Small louvered vents are positioned on both surfaces of the south east corner of the kitchen wing. A projection along the east side wall, at the intersection of the T, includes another entrance door. While the windows are painted white, the trim around all doors and window openings, as well as the corner boards, consists of plain wood planks painted green. In addition, vertical wood strips are spaced at intervals on all facades, a detail not found on any other building at the camp. Five metal chimneys project from the roof, four from the north slope and one from the south. The building is supported by a log-post foundation.

The interior of the dining hall features plywood to the sill level with fiber board above, an exposed truss system, and a number of tables. The west end of the dining hall is partitioned to create a separate room. A long serving counter is positioned at the intersection of the dining hall and the kitchen. The kitchen includes a walk-freezer, a gas stove, sinks, various counters, a chopping block, and storage space.

History: This building does not appear on the camp's oldest available site plan, prepared by the CCC about 1936. At that time, the Rabideau Camp contained about 145 enrollees. Within two years, however, the operation had increased to its full roster strength of about 200, and this building apparently was constructed to provide additional quarters. Former CCC enrollees have referred to this structure as a "barracks," and it is so labeled on a site plan prepared by the University of Illinois in 1946 for its summer field school. On this drawing, only the rectangular, northern portion of the building appears. Shortly afterwards, the university

converted the structure into a Mess Hall to replace the original CCC dining facility, which had recently been destroyed by fire. The conversion entailed the construction of an irregular-plan kitchen wing on the south, partly formed by attaching the original CCC Oil House (Building No. 22, HABS No. MN-147-R), a 20' x 24' structure that formerly stood in the camp's service yard. In planning the building's reconstruction, the university requested information about the layout of mess halls at other CCC camps in the Chippewa National Forest. In fact, kitchen equipment from the mess hall at the Remer CCC Camp was transferred to the Rabideau Camp for installation. The Mess Hall was restored by the Forest Service in 1986.

Sources: The oldest known site plan of the camp while still occupied by the CCC, entitled "Rabideau Camp F-50" (ca. 1936); same plan updated by the Forest Service in 1945, indicating that the Mess Hall had been destroyed by fire; a site plan, dated October 10, 1945, and discussion concerning the Mess Hall included in a "Memorandum Concerning the Summer Surveying Camp," dated October 8, 1945; an article in the Champaign-Urbana News Gazette, entitled "UI Opens camp for Surveyors in Minnesota," dated July 15, 1946, all located at the University Archives, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, in the Civil Engineering Subject File Record Series 11/5/1. Correspondence between the Forest Service and the University of Illinois, dated October 13, 1945, December 8, 1945, and January 17, 1946, and a copy of the original "Special Use Permit," dated May 31, 1946, granted to the University of Illinois for the use of the Rabideau Camp attached to correspondence, dated January 3, 1950, all in a file on the Rabideau Camp at the Iron Range Research Center in Chisholm, Minnesota. See also HABS No. MN-147.

Historian: Rolf T. Anderson, 1994