

LAKE HIDDENWOOD STATE PARK, THE NATIONAL YOUTH  
ADMINISTRATION (NYA) PARK WALLS  
Southeast of the Intersection of 127<sup>th</sup> Street and 309<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Selby vicinity  
Walworth County  
South Dakota

HALS SD-4  
*HALS SD-4*

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001

## HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

### LAKE HIDDENWOOD STATE PARK, THE NATIONAL YOUTH ADMINISTRATION (NYA) PARK WALLS

HALS NO. SD-4

Location: Southeast of the Intersection of 127<sup>th</sup> Street and 309<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Hiddenwood State Park, Selby vicinity, Walworth County, South Dakota

Lat: 45.546247, Long: -99.976269 (southwest corner of park walls, Google Earth, Simple Cylindrical Projection, WGS84)

Significance: The National Youth Administration (NYA) park walls at Lake Hiddenwood State Park represent the work of local youths participating in a significant New Deal program. Youths from Campbell, McPherson, Edmunds and Walworth County constructed the walls circa 1940. The fieldstone walls are a rare, intact example of NYA work in north central S.D. The construction techniques embodied in the masonry walls demonstrate a high level of craftsmanship for NYA participants and are a great example of construction projects undertaken by the NYA.

Description: The park walls bound the picnic area on the west and south sides. The creek running into the lake bounds the picnic area on the north and east sides. The west wall runs north to south for 151'. The west wall is not contiguous; the north section is 72' and the south section is 75'. There is a 4' open space between them. ( $72' + 4' + 75' = 151'$ ). The south wall runs west to east for 89'. The east wall is not contiguous; the west section is 47' and the east section is 38'. There is a 4' open space between them. ( $47' + 4' + 38' = 89'$ )

The walls are roughly 1' high and 1' wide. The corner post located at the wall termination points and one corner (for a total of seven) are 2' x 2' wide and 3' tall.

The mortar appears to have a cement component. The walls are coursed fieldstone, having approximately level beds and continuous course levels. Pyramidal cement caps the corner posts. One cornerpost, located at the middle of the south wall, has an 8" x 8" cement name placard reading "NYA."

The two walls form a 90 degree angle around the picnic area. It is 48' feet from the south wall to the 19' x 32' picnic shelter. This picnic shelter was built in 1970 and replaced a fieldstone picnic shelter. North of the picnic shelter 32' is a circa 1970 fire pit.

A combination of deciduous and coniferous trees is located around the picnic area. Large cottonwood and Ponderosa pine trees may date from the NYA

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period. However, no historical photos were located for comparison.

The park walls are in good condition. The mortar is sound and no damage to the wall is evident. One area of concern is along the south wall where a large tree is causing part of the wall to bulge. The walls are otherwise sound.

History:

The park walls were built in circa 1940 as part of general improvements at Lake Hiddenwood State Park. Lake Hiddenwood was constructed in 1926 as a joint effort of the Lake Hiddenwood Association, Selby Commercial Club and the state department of Fish and Game. Fish and Game purchased the land impounded by the dam while the other entities purchased the surrounding land from Barney Muss for \$25 per acre.

In 1937, Walworth County commissioners sponsored developments and improvements at the lake as a Works Progress Administration (WPA) project. By August of 1938, WPA crews were landscaping, planting trees, rip rapping the dam, gravelling the beach, and constructing a bathhouse and picnic shelter out of native fieldstone.

The NYA began work in the park in 1939. Local NYA supervisor Otto Wenzel was assigned 350 youths from the surrounding Campbell, Edmunds, McPherson, and Walworth counties.

The NYA was established in June of 1935, at the urging of Eleanor Roosevelt who was concerned about unemployed youth who were falling through the cracks of other New Deal programs. The purpose of the NYA was to provide part-time work to two groups of youths age 16-24. The first group was those in school who needed financial help to continue their education. The second group was those out-of-school youth who were unemployed and needy.

The NYA promoted four objectives:

1. Provide funds for part-time employment of needy secondary school, college, and graduate students so that they could continue their education.
2. Provide funds for part-time employment of out-of-school youth on work projects designed to benefit the community.
3. Encourage the establishment of job training, counseling, and placement services for youth.
4. Encourage the development and extension of constructive educational and job-qualifying, leisure-time activities.

Interested youth could apply through their school or the nearest NYA office, which was Eureka for youths in this area. High school students could earn a maximum \$6 a month, college students \$25 a month, and second-year and beyond graduate students \$30-40 a month.

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There were two broad categories of work projects in the NYA. The first was student aid, which consisted of work on campuses and in communities. These jobs were in libraries, museums, educational offices, laboratories and also assignments assisting teachers, coaches, librarians, and playground supervisors. The second category was for out-of-school youths. These projects encompassed community development, recreational leadership, rural youth development, public service training and research projects.

Community development projects included construction projects such as highway and road construction, building construction or renovation, conservation work, and the development of recreational facilities. Under this direction, work at Lake Hiddenwood was completed.

There were 25 boys from Walworth County working at Lake Hiddenwood during the summer of 1940. They were laying out roadways to the new picnic house and protecting the parking area with boulders. A concrete floor was also laid in the picnic shelter while preparation for the bathhouse continued.

The park walls were likely constructed c. 1940, the same time the picnic shelter and other NYA projects were occurring in the park. No source could be located that mention the park walls. However, it's clear from the "NYA" inscription who constructed them.

The NYA expended over \$662 million from 1935-43. Over 4.8 million youths participated. During the first three years of the program, \$1,384,911 was expended on out-of-school projects in S.D. Construction of the park walls at Lake Hiddenwood was one of these projects.

Lake Hiddenwood became a state park in 1951. It has been in use continuously as a camping, hiking, picnicking and fishing destination. The park walls still frame the picnic area on the south and west boundaries. The original 1938 picnic shelter and fire pit were replaced in 1971. The new construction is in the same footprint as the old and of the same dimensions.

Sources:

**Monographs and Articles**

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Dennis, Michelle. *Federal Relief Construction in South Dakota, 1929-1941*. Pierre: SD, South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office, 1998.

Hendrickson, Kenneth E. "The National Youth Administration in South Dakota: Youth and the New Deal, 1935-1943" *South Dakota History*, (v9, 1978-1979),

131-151.

Walworth County Historical Committee. *Walworth County Centennial History Book 1883-1983*. Walworth County Historical Committee, 1983.

**Government Records**

South Dakota WPA Records. South Dakota State Archives. Roll 5936, b66842.

Federal Relief in South Dakota research file. South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office. Box 1.

**Newspapers**

*The Walworth County Record* 11 August 1938 – 22 August 1940.

Historian: C.B. Nelson  
SD State Historic Preservation Office  
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Entry 2014 HALS Challenge: Documenting Landscapes of the New Deal

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Looking north at entrance of south NYA park wall (C.B. Nelson 2014).



Looking west at the NYA park wall (C.B. Nelson, 2014).

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Looking northwest at NYA park walls which encompass picnic area (C.B. Nelson, 2014).



Looking down at the top of the NYA park walls (C.B. Nelson, 2014).

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Looking at typical masonry example of NYA park walls (C.B. Nelson, 2014).



Looking down at cap on corner posts of NYA park walls (C.B. Nelson, 2014).



Typical tree located around the NYA park walls in picnic area (C.B. Nelson, 2014).