

History of the North Carolina State Park System - Part 4: WWII and Post WWII Developments ^[1]

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[NC Division of Parks of Recreation](#)^[2], NC Department of Cultural Environment & Natural Resources.

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World War II

Though visitation declined, North Carolina's state parks were by no means idle during the war. The group camps at Crabtree Creek were used as rest camps by British sailors and for extensive military maneuvers. [Hanging Rock](#) ^[11] was used for field training of Army Signal Corps students. Soldiers used [Morrow Mountain](#) ^[12] for bivouac and field training. [Mount Mitchell](#) ^[13] was used for secret training and experiments with radar. [Jones](#) ^[14] and [Singletary](#) ^[15] lakes were used by the Camp David anti-aircraft artillery school, and [Fort Macon](#) ^[16] was taken over by the army. The fort was re-garrisoned and armed with six-inch guns to protect the Beaufort Harbor area from German U-boat attacks.

Post World War II Developments

In 1947, the General Assembly, in its first state park capital improvement appropriation, allocated \$500,000 to be used for the construction of public use facilities.

[Cliffs of the Neuse State Park](#) ^[17], donated by [Lionel Weil](#) ^[18] and members of the Wayne Foundation, had opened in 1945 and received \$57,000 of the appropriation for a swimming area and bathhouse. The most prominent natural feature of this coastal plain park is a series of 90-foot cliffs, which were cut over millions of years by the Neuse River.

First State Recreation Commission

In 1945, North Carolina created the first State Recreation Commission in the country. This commission operated separately from state parks until 1971.

In February 1948, Hiwassee Lake State Park was leased from the Tennessee Valley Authority. Included in the park were cabins and day-use facilities. The lease was terminated in December 1952 and the unit was removed from the state parks system.

Creation of a New Division

The post-war era saw state parks elevated to a new status when on October 1, 1948, a Division of State Parks was created separate from State Forestry.

Demand for recreation increased after the war. With appropriations in 1947 and in 1949, the Division was able to purchase tracts for existing parks and to construct facilities. Another improvement financed by the appropriations was the hiring of additional staff, which allowed better public service and enhanced interpretive programs.

Transfer of Historical Parks

For a number of years, state parks operated historic areas. Most of these state historic parks were acquired in the early 1950s. The first of these areas, Rendezvous Mountain, was donated in 1926. As its history was questionable and the acreage small, it was transferred to the Division of Forestry in 1956. Other historical parks included:

[Battle of Alamance](#) ^[19] – the site of sectional battles between the frontier and the eastern seaboard.

[Charles B. Aycock Birthplace](#) ^[20] – birthplace of Charles B. Aycock, Governor of North Carolina from 1901-1903.

Brunswick Town ^[21] – a leading seaport on the Cape Fear in 1725.

James Iredell House ^[22] – the Colonial home of James Iredell, Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States.

Town Creek Indian Mound ^[23] – an Indian cultural and religious center.

Tryon Palace ^[24] – the first fixed capitol of the royal colony.


In order to allow the Division to concentrate on developing recreational and scenic parks, the General Assembly transferred historic sites to the Department of Archives and History, which had been created in 1955. Fort Macon, though of historic interest, was retained by parks because it offered unique coastal recreation.

In 1951, North Carolina leased land for recreation sites along Kerr Lake ^[25] and created the Kerr Reservoir Development Commission to manage these areas. Kerr Lake became a popular recreation spot soon after opening.

Principles Governing State Parks

In January of 1955, the Board of Conservation and Development adopted criteria for the establishment and management of state parks. These principles defined the purpose of the North Carolina state parks system and governed its functioning for years to come.

Infrequent and small appropriations over the years had done little to expand and support a well-rounded park system. Although the post-war period brought recognition, had it not been for federal work programs, North Carolina's park system would be little advanced from its beginnings.

Keep reading > Part 5: Growth through Donations and LWCF Assistance, 1956-1970 ^[6]  ^[6]

References:

Beanblossom, Robert. ed. 2011. *Histories of southeastern state park systems* Association of Southeastern State Park Directors.

Additional resources:

NC Division of Parks and Recreation, NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources. <https://www.ncparks.gov/> ^[2]

NC Division of Parks and Recreation. "Annual Report of the North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation." NC Digital Collections: <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/documents?search=163578861&searchtypes=Metadata|Full%20text&applyState=true> ^[26]

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