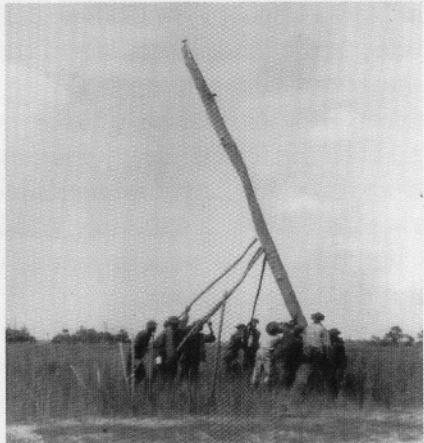
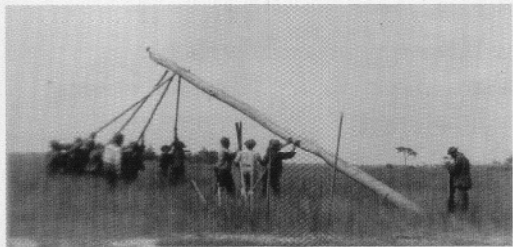


St. Marks and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)

GPS Coordinates:
84°8.710' W ~ 30° 7.797' N

Initiated by President Franklin D. Roosevelt and authorized on March 31, 1933, the CCC put thousands of young men to work across the United States.



Courtesy St. Marks Refuge files



When road conditions prevented a truck from operating, the bulldozer provided the horsepower. (Courtesy St. Marks Refuge files)

The U.S. Army oversaw housing, healthcare, education, feeding, and moving men and materials. Each man received \$30 a month, but \$25 was sent home to his family.

Thirty-three camps were located in Florida. Camp BF-1, BF stood for Bird Refuge, was assigned to the St. Marks Migratory Waterfowl Refuge, as it was called at the time. It was one of the few African-American camps in the CCC.

Between 1934 and the early 1940s, men from this camp built the refuge. Heavy equipment used to construct roads and impoundments included dump trucks, draglines, a bulldozer, and a rock crusher, but most of the work depended on the muscles and skills of the men.

Almost everything was fabricated by the CCC men. Poles that carried the power and telephone lines, fence posts, and cypress for siding and roofing were cut on the refuge and trimmed by hand. Among their accomplishments are the earthen levees surrounding the pools, miles of

St. Marks and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)



Dragline mat material being taken from the East River Swamp (Courtesy St. Marks Refuge files)

ditches, 30 acres cleared for a reservoir, and Lighthouse Road. They built dwellings and other buildings, a diversion dam, and two lookout towers. They strung 30.8 miles of telephone line and 4.5 miles of power line, cleared a 24-mile truck trail, 21.5 miles of firebreaks, ran surveys, installed cattle guards, and devoted 416 man-days to fighting forest fires. Smaller projects included building toolboxes and desks, and landscaping. With little heavy equipment available at the time, their main tools were shovels and muscles. Their work was deeply appreciated by the staff.



Maple lumber from trees harvested from refuge swamps was used to construct desks and other furniture used in refuge offices and residences. (Courtesy St. Marks Refuge files)

Most of the structures they built no longer exist. Their legacy lives on in Lighthouse Road and the pools that provide habitat for migratory and resident wildlife.

When the U.S. entered World War II, the CCC program ended. Most of the CCC men went to war. Their training and experience had prepared them well for serving their country.

The St. Marks Refuge Association, Inc., with a matching grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, produced the signs and brochures for the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge History Trail. The association is a 501(c)(3) organization that supports educational, environmental, and biological programs of St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge. Visit www.stmarksrefuge.org for more information.

April 2019

Civil War Salt Works

GPS Coordinates:
84°8.710' W ~ 30° 7.797' N



After the Civil War was over, the salt works were abandoned. Scattered remnants of rusted boilers can still be found on the refuge. (Courtesy Bruce Ballister)

In the days before refrigeration, salt was used to preserve meats and tan leather. When the Union blockade along the southeastern coast cut off salt shipments, the Confederacy turned to the ocean, and no area was more productive than the shallow bays and marshes of Florida's Gulf Coast between the Suwannee River and St. Andrews Bay.

Ranging from small family-run salt works using a few iron kettles that could hold 60 - 100 gallons of water set in a brick furnace to huge complexes using large boilers of up to 1,000 kettles, 489 salt works operated between the St. Marks and Suwannee Rivers. Salt water was boiled to a mushy consistency and

then spread on oak planks to dry in the sun. In damp weather the salt was kept under cover and small fires helped the drying process.

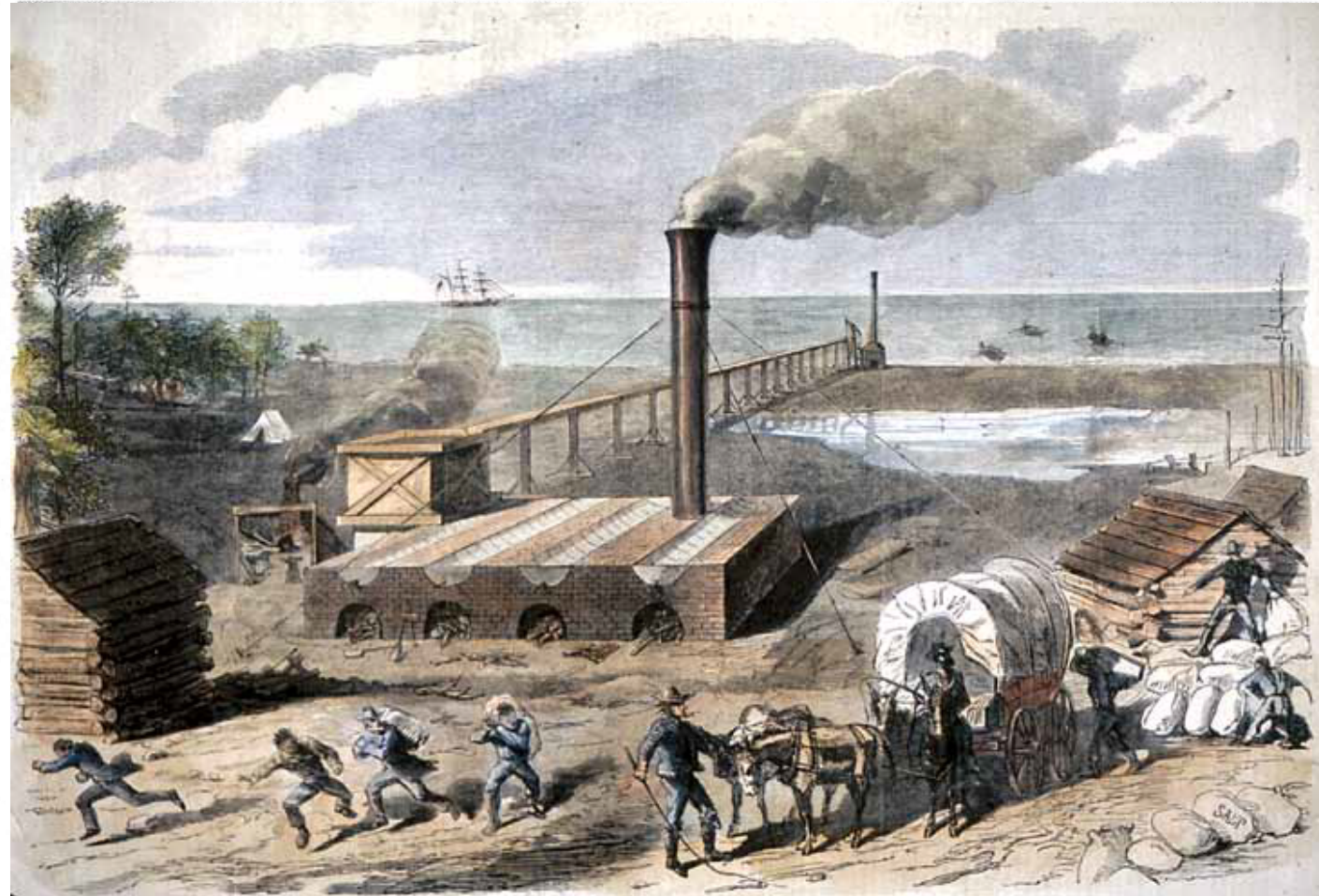
Early in the war, the salt industry drew little attention from the Union. From late 1862 until the end of the war, the U.S. Navy shelled the salt works repeatedly. Workers fled as

raiders came ashore to destroy equipment. In February 1864, two separate attacks destroyed the salt works at St. Marks and Goose Creek. The latter produced 900 bushels of salt each day. Buildings and equipment destroyed by an 1863 raid on a large St. Andrews Bay plant were valued at 6 million dollars at that time.

Men who could produce 20 bushels of salt a day were excused from serving, but the labor could be just as dangerous as the front line once the Union began targeting larger operations. Heavy storms also took a toll on the workers and the equipment. As the salt was shipped

farther from the coast and passed through the hands of dealers, the price increased. In the spring of 1862, salt sold for \$3 a bushel. By autumn, the price was \$16 to \$20 a bushel. Salt production attracted profiteers, and speculators purchased salt marshes to hold for future production. Seine fisheries were associated with the salt works at Shell Island and Mashes Island, but the Confederacy did not make good use of this food resource.

Civil War Salt Works



Most salt-making operations were small but larger works could produce hundreds of bushels daily. (Courtesy State Archives of Florida)

Salt was still a necessary commodity after the war. When regular trade resumed, the number of people engaged in its production declined in the Gulf coast area. Bricks, wood, kettles, and boilers that could be put to other uses were scavenged from the sites.

Broken parts or materials that were too large to easily move were left behind and continue to deteriorate.

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