



Photo by B. Hutchisson



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City Lake Brings Story And Beauty

By DAN THORP

Even though WPA stands for "Works Progress Administration," many people during the Depression referred to it as "We Poke Along." A true child of the Depression, the City Lake was dug out by hand. The project had a dual purpose of giving gainful work to the unemployed and providing the city with an emergency reservoir.

In order to provide men with something to do and give them enough money to support their family to some degree, the WPA was formed. "People were certified by the Welfare Department as needing work and given jobs out there," said Mrs. Fairy Bandy, Rocky Mount Recreational Director for 30 years. The lake served well as a place of employment and as an emergency reservoir. However, in later years, as Rocky Mount began to grow, a larger reservoir was dug. Mr. Bennett was Mayor of Rocky Mount at the time of the City Lake construction. Due to all

the excitement of the new Lake, Mrs. Bennett and her Garden Club decided to join in on the bustling new community act by planting shrubbery around the driveway. Mrs. Fairy Bandy planted the Christmas tree on the center island.

The site size, in acres, of the entire lake was built to a 19.06 acre plan and was dug 11 acres under water. The lake remains the original size today. "The land on which the lake is now built was swamp land, as best as I can remember," said L. H. Burnette, an employee of the recreation department. "The city also already owned the land. Some project had to be done to support families, so what better way to turn swamp land into something useful than to build a lake on it?" In 1937 when the Recreation Department was first established, Mrs. Fairy Bandy, the director, and a department secretary were the only employees.

According to the book "Taking Stock of Rocky Mount," "for

a long time fishing wasn't allowed at the City Lake. Sometimes in the early 40's copper sulphate was put in the lake to kill the algae. To the surprise of many people, poor distribution of this copper sulphate killed thousands of fish in the lake. Found dead floating on the lake, fish by the truckloads were hauled away and buried. Wildlife officials surveyed the situation and agreed that since the lake was heavily overstocked, no real harm had been done." City Lake fishing is now open to the public, and at intervals is restocked by the Wildlife Commission. It has been recently stocked with 5,500 bass for area fishermen.

According to the "Staged Development Plan" written by the Rocky Mount Recreational Department, "The fountain in the center of the lake with ducks in the water provide the visitor entering the City with a pleasant view. The City Lake and surrounding park is an area of quiet, peace, and beauty for all Rocky Mount citizens."



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