

TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE

Interpretive Guide to:

CADDO LAKE

STATE PARK





THE CADDO INDIANS

In the late 18th or early 19th century, Caddo Indians settled on this rich land, where according to tribal legend, "water thrown up into the drift along the shore by a wind" formed Tso'to (Sodo) Lake. Legends tell of the formation of the lake and Sha'childi'ni (Timber Hill), the first and last known Caddo village in this area. People have lived in this area for at least 12,000 years. For centuries, they hunted and gathered among the wetlands, forests and broad floodplains. Then they began to settle in permanent villages. The Caddo hunted wild game with bows and arrows, fished, and farmed corn, beans and squash. They built ceremonial centers and maintained far-reaching trade routes.

THE CCC BUILDS CADDO SP

In 1933, Mr. T. J. Taylor (better known as Ladybird Johnson's father), several local institutions and other land donors contributed property for the development of the first National Park Service-supervised state park in Texas. Utilizing the National Park Service (NPS) natural design style, CCC Companies 889 and 857 developed Caddo Lake State Park between 1933 and 1937.

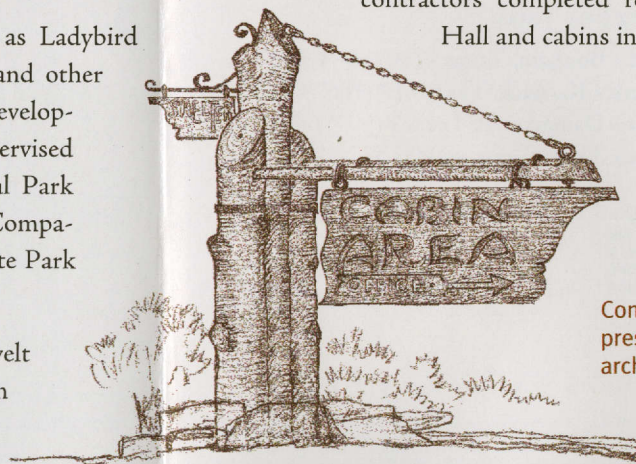
Created by President Franklin D. Roosevelt during the Great Depression, the Civilian Conservation Corps provided employment

and vocational education for unemployed young men while providing necessary labor for conservation projects, ultimately promoting the development of state park systems around the country. Enrollees were men between the ages of 17 and 25 who qualified for public assistance. The program provided clothing, food, medical care and \$30 a month, of which \$25 was sent home to their families.

CCC enrollees spent their daily time attending classes and constructing roads, trails, buildings, native log picnic tables and other furniture. The structural designs incorporate natural materials from the surrounding landscape. The men enjoyed recreational activities just as visitors do today, using time away from work projects to host open houses, dinners and organized sporting events.



The park entrance portals, Rec Hall, cabins and pavilion were built in the rustic NPS style, blending architecture and nature. Several of these structures have withstood 70 years of wear and weather and are used today by park visitors. Texas Parks and Wildlife Department staff and contractors completed restoration of the Rec Hall and cabins in the fall of 2002.



Concept for park sign as presented in original CCC architectural illustrations

A NATURAL TREASURE



One of the world's natural treasures, diverse habitat types may be seen at Caddo Lake, making it a suitable home for a wide variety of flora and fauna. The upland forest of pine, oak and hickory produced many of the native materials used in original construction of the park. The trees in the bottomland hardwood forest stand tall beside the bald cypress and water tupelo swamps where the stately trees flourish in the quiet backwaters of the lake. In the freshwater marsh, grasses and reeds provide shelter for turtles, a variety of fish, birds, toads and snakes. These habitats make the park an important educational, scientific and recreational resource.

In 1993, Caddo Lake was designated a "Wetland of International Importance, especially as waterfowl habitat," under the Ramsar Preservation Convention. This international treaty drafted in Ramsar, Iran, seeks to limit the worldwide loss of wetlands. Caddo Lake is the only naturally-formed large lake in Texas. Depending on rainfall, this maze of slow-moving bayous, wetlands and backwaters covers about 25,000 acres. Although a natural logjam created the lake, today dams and reservoirs keep its waters entirely under human control.

Approximately 2 1/2 miles of hiking trails meander through the park, some venturing through steep terrain in the forest beside Big Cypress Bayou. The serene water of the lake is excellent for year-round fishing, canoeing and is a favorite place for kayaking. The park also offers excellent opportunities for birding. At park headquarters, discover the colorful history of the area including tales of Caddo Indians, the romantic steamboat era, the rise and fall of pearl hunting, prohibition and moon shine, the Great Depression and park development after World War II.



DISCOVER A QUIET RETREAT IN EAST TEXAS AMONG SPANISH MOSS-DRAPED TREES AND CYPRESS BAYOUS. HERE ALONG THE BANK OF BIG CYPRESS BAYOU YOU WILL FIND THE 484-ACRE CADDO LAKE STATE PARK. THE ENDURING CRAFTSMANSHIP OF THE RUSTIC STONE AND WOOD CABINS BUILT BY THE CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS IN THE 1930s EVOKES A SENSE OF PEACE AND TRANQUILITY. CADDO IS A REFUGE FROM THE 21ST CENTURY, A PLACE TO ENJOY SIMPLE RECREATIONAL AND INTERPRETIVE OPPORTUNITIES AND ESCAPE THE RUSH OF MODERN LIFE.



Cabins were designed to incorporate natural materials from the surrounding landscape. Still in use today, they are a testament to CCC skill and craftsmanship.

THANK YOU FOR VISITING!

While enjoying this natural beauty, please remember that everything you see in the park is protected. Artifacts, rocks, plants and animals (even snakes) are all part of the region's rich natural and cultural heritage. Help us keep park recreational use sustainable for the future and protect these resources by leaving things as you find them.

FURTHER READING

- Caddo Was... A short history of Caddo Lake* by Fred Dahmer (1989)
- Parks for Texas* by James Wright Steely (1999)
- Every Sun That Rises* by Wyatt Moore (1985)

We hope you will visit these CCC-developed parks and other state parks while visiting East Texas:

- Bonham State Park • Bonham, Texas • (903) 583-5022
- Caddo Lake State Park • Karnack, Texas • (903) 679-3351
- Daingerfield State Park • Daingerfield, Texas • (903) 645-2921
- Tyler State Park • Tyler, Texas • (903) 597-5338



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