

CAMP COLUMBIA

Historic Architectural and Archaeological Assessment

Connecticut Dept. of Environmental
Protection – State Parks Division

Project Data

Date: 2002

Size: 591 acres

Context: Rural Litchfield County
located in the western part
of Connecticut

Project Description:

Camp Columbia is nearly 600 acres of contiguous, rural land that was the former summer engineering school of Columbia University. The school began in 1891 and continued until the 1970s, when enrollment dropped off. Camp Columbia was the oldest and most comprehensive university owned engineering summer camp in the United States throughout the first half of the 20th-century. The presence of the university and its students greatly affected the town of Morris during that time, and its residents continue to feel a strong connection to the site. In March 2000, the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection acquired the property through the Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Fund with plans to preserve the land as open recreational space.

EDC was part of a diverse team of consultants that included historical architects, an archaeologist and ourselves, historical landscape architects. Our work studied the site's precontact occupation by Native Americans, a century of settlement and farming, and the University's role and involvement in both the community and the Camp. Historical research of primary and secondary resources documented the events that took place at the Camp, as well as its physical growth and development. Together, we undertook an evaluation of the built resources, the landscape, and the archaeological potential of the Camp and then prepared recommendations for rehabilitation, restoration, adaptive re-use, interpretation and/or demolition of extant structures. Our team worked together to inform the State of Connecticut of the historic integrity, extant features and intrinsic significance of Camp Columbia. The property is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.



Undated post card, pre-1942.



Looking up at the YMCA building (2002)



*Student-built, stone observation tower and
volunteer vegetative growth in Campus Core
(2002)*



Undated aerial photograph (CT DEP)