



Civilian Conservation Corps Shelter Houses

Introduction

Between 1933 and 1941 the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was active in the newly created Tucson Mountain Park (TMP), west of Tucson. During that time the CCC was tasked with making improvements to the park; these improvements enhance the visitor's experience. In 1961 the northern portion of TMP was withdrawn from the county park and added to Saguaro National Monument. Today most of the CCC improvements may be found within Saguaro National Park's Tucson Mountain District (TMD).

The CCC created eight picnic areas, five of which are in TMD. At these picnic areas the CCC built tables with benches, fire places, rest rooms, ramadas, and shelter houses; the Park Service refers to the latter structures as ramadas, but to the CCC they were shelter houses. The full-height walls and pitched roofs are what make shelter houses different from ramadas. Most shelter houses also have a fire place.

Description

The CCC built a total of four shelter houses in the Tucson Mountains, two at TMD, and two at TMP. The shelter houses in TMD are at Signal Hill and Ez-Kim-In-Zin, the two at TMP are at Gates Pass (which has been heavily reconstructed) and Juan Santa Cruz. The shelter houses at Gates Pass and Signal Hill are very similar in design, but no two shelter houses are identical. The shelter houses range in size from the largest, at Juan Santa Cruz, at 18' by 14'3" to the smallest, Gates Pass and Ez-Kim-In-Zin,



Photograph of the shelter house at Ez-Kim-In-Zin picnic area.

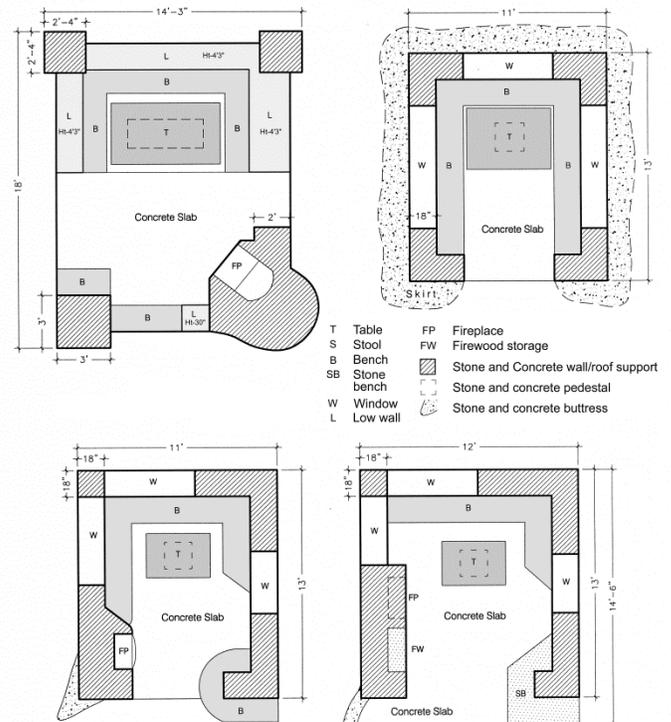


Illustration showing the floor plans of all four CCC shelter houses that were built at TMD/TMP. Upper left: Juan Santa Cruz; Upper right: Ez-Kim-In-Zin; Lower left: Gates Pass; Lower right: Signal Hill. Floor plans are to scale.

range in size from the largest, at Juan Santa Cruz, at 18' by 14'3" to the smallest, Gates Pass and Ez-Kim-In-Zin, at 13' by 11'. All shelter houses have a table and wrap-around benches. All but one, at Ez-Kim-In-Zin, had a built in fireplace. The shelter house at Ez-Kim-In-Zin is the only one with a skirt/buttress – the flaring out of the lower walls.

Each of the rectangular shelter houses were constructed of uncoursed stone with large stone piers at the corners supporting a peeled log structure, plywood sheathing and a composition gable roof and saguaro rib ceiling. Low walls on three sides of the structures form windows. Each shelter house has a free-standing concrete picnic table which is supported by a stone and concrete pedestal(s); all but one of the tables have three wrap-around benches that extend the full length (more or less) of the interior walls. Three of the four shelter houses have built in fire places. The shelter house at Signal Hill also had what appears to be a fire wood storage area next to the fire place. The fire place at the Signal Hill shelter house has been filled and sealed.

Cultural Resource Brief

All four shelter houses are good examples of the NPS Rustic architectural style that was common at the time (see Resource Brief on NPS Rustic Architecture). In particular, the shelter house at Ez-Kim-In-Zin which seems to have erupted out of the rocky outcrop.

In 1961 when the Tucson Mountain District was added to Saguaro National Monument the Park Service began a program of rehabilitation that rebuilt the roofs and added concrete floors to the shelter houses.



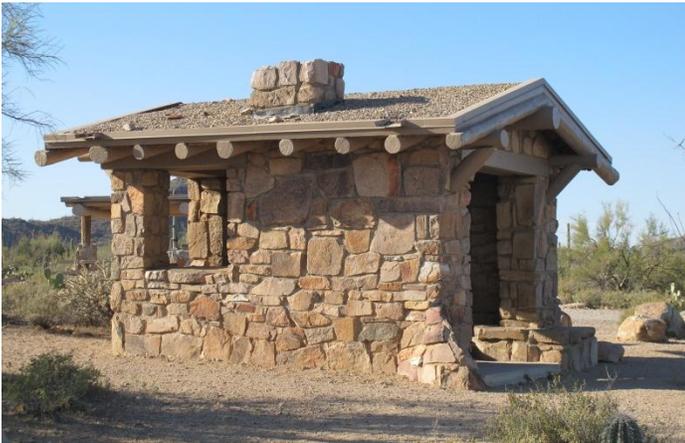
Recent photograph of the shelter house at Gates Pass. This structure was heavily reconstructed in the 1990s by the county.



Photograph of the interior of the shelter house at Signal Hill picnic area. Note table, wrap-around bench, and filled in fire place with fire wood storage area (at left).



Photograph of the shelter house at Juan Santa Cruz picnic area taken in the 1930s.



Photograph of the shelter house at Signal Hill picnic area.

Visiting the Shelter Houses

Remember, the Shelter Houses are an important part of our local history and as such are significant cultural resources. Please be respectful and act accordingly.

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