

THE HISTORY OF THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL IN NORTH GEORGIA

Ours is a friendship of the trails that lead to faraway places!

“A footpath for those who seek fellowship with the wilderness”

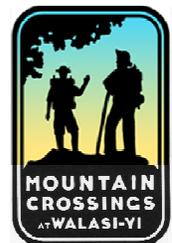
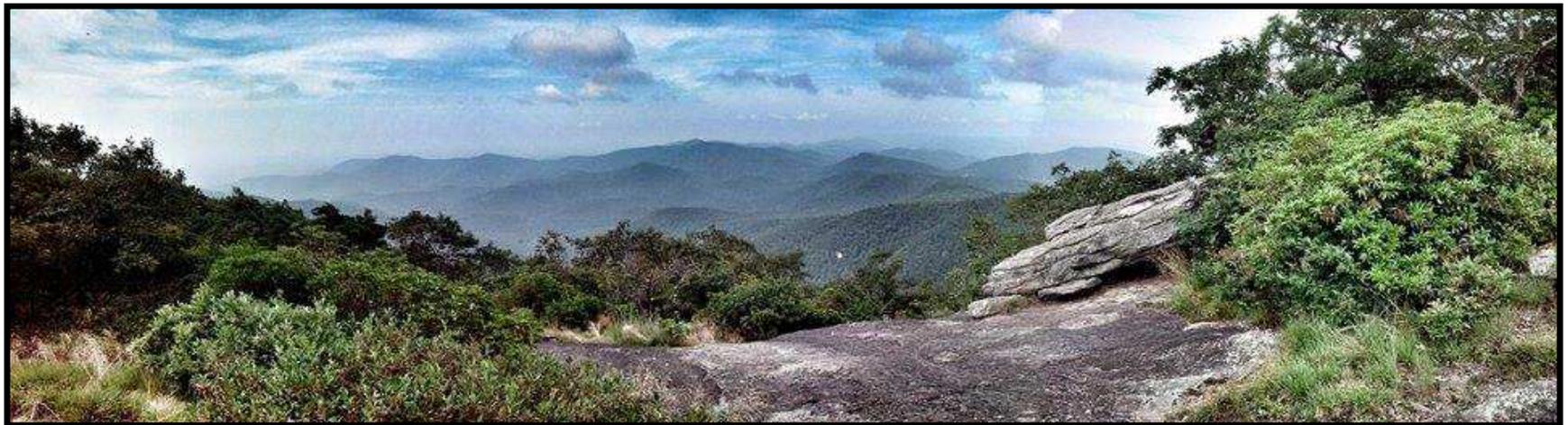


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This document describes the history of the Appalachian Trail with special emphasis on the role that residents and places in north Georgia have had in its creation. The 2,190 mile Appalachian Trail is the product of the vision, hard work, and dedication of thousands of people, mostly unpaid volunteers, who from the early 1920s to present time have conceived, built, maintained, and protected this internationally famous foot path. The trail has been succinctly described as “Remote for detachment, narrow for chosen company, winding for leisure, lonely for contemplation, the Trail leads not merely north or south, but upward to the body, mind and soul of man” (Harold Allen – early ATC volunteer).

For more information about the Appalachian Trail or to learn about the Blairsville-Union County Appalachian Trail Community visit <http://www.unioncountyatcommunity.net/> or scan the following QR Code.



NATIONAL EVENTS

1921



Benton MacKaye

Benton MacKaye proposes "An Appalachian Trail: A Project in Regional Planning" as a long trail or footpath along the full length of the Appalachian mountain range as "a sort of retreat or refuge from a civilization which was becoming too mechanized".^{1,2,2b}

1922-1923

An Appalachian Trail Committee is formed in Washington, D.C., to further the ideas of Benton MacKaye; in 1923, the first section of the Appalachian Trail (A.T.) is opened in Palisades Park in New York.¹

Georgia Representative Bonnell Stone advocates the construction of a highway through Neel Gap and Union County, opening the areas north of the Blue Ridge to more commerce and tourism between the farming communities of north Georgia and the population centers of Gainesville, Atlanta, and Knoxville.³

Bonnell Stone Monument - naming him "the Father of Forestry in Georgia"



This important highway is started in 1923 with mule teams and manual labor, resulting in a dirt road 14 feet wide in 1925. The road was paved to a 9-foot width in 1926, then widened to 14 feet and repaved in 1931.^{5a} The road is significant for the early development of the A.T. because it provides relatively easy access to a trail in Neel Gap at the base of Blood Mountain, the highest point in Georgia on what would become the route of the future A.T.³

NORTH GEORGIA EVENTS

1922-1925



Bonnell H Stone



Bonnell Stone (leaning against monument) at dedication of Neel Gap



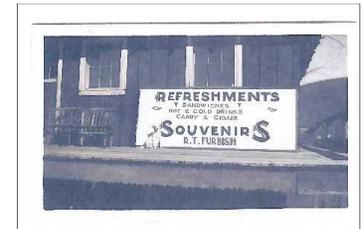
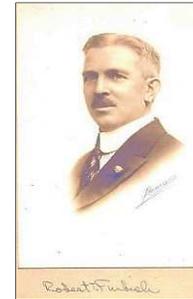
Building road at Neel Gap, 1926. Pictured: Front, L-R: Ed Townsend, Tom Wilson, Steve Spiva, Ben Wilson, Hub Collins; Back, L-R: Jep Souther, Uley Collins, Jess Souther, Ivan Collins¹²

NATIONAL EVENTS

NORTH GEORGIA EVENTS

1925-1928

Robert Furbish operates a small store and provides lodging at Neel Gap. He is noted for writing poetry about what he observes in the mountains and the people who visit his store.³⁴



1927-1928

The Appalachian Trail Conference (ATC) is formed in Washington, D.C., with Major William Welch as chairman, to be followed by Arthur Perkins as chairman in 1927. A constitution is adopted in 1928 and the organization secured.

1929

October 29, 1929 – the U.S. Stock Market collapses creating panic on Wall Street and initiating a cascade of events that eventually plunges the nation into the Great Depression.

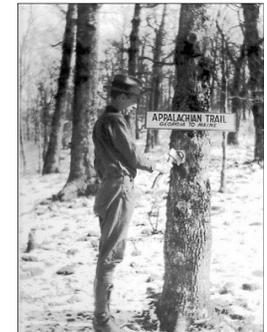
1929



Roy Ozmer

Roy Ozmer, accomplished woodsman and outdoorsman, is enlisted by ATC to scout much of the southern section of the trail, a task he completes as far as Virginia in 1929.

Eddie Stone, Assistant State Forester, and his assistant Charlie Elliott, work with Ozmer to refine the route for the proposed trail in Georgia, selecting Mt. Oglethorpe near Tate as the most desirable southern terminus of the trail. Their decision leads to conflict with trail advocates in North Carolina and Tennessee who want the trail to go through the entire length of the Great Smoky Mountain National Park ending in the Cohuttas in Georgia. Eddie nearly singlehandedly takes the bull by the horns and blazes the trail from Mt. Oglethorpe, through Amicalola to Springer Mountain, Woody Gap, over Blood Mountain, Frogtown Gap (later named Neel Gap), Cow Rock, Horsetrough Gap, to the North Carolina line. Stone, with Ozmer and Elliott, enlists the support of famed and respected outdoor writer, Horace Kephart, who suggests an alternative routing in the Smoky Mountains and through the Nantahala National Forest to Standing Indian and on into Georgia picking up on the route proposed by Stone, Ozmer, and Elliott.^{1,8}



*Eddie Stone
blazing the A.T.*

NATIONAL EVENTS

The recently completed paved U.S. Highway 19/129 through Neel Gap provides access for local residents to the trail leading to the summit of Blood Mountain.^{12,13} (Photo – courtesy of D. Friedly)

1930

The 4th ATC meeting is held in May 1930, in Skyland, Virginia. During this meeting, the Georgia route proposed by Stone is enthusiastically presented by Ozmer and supported in a letter from Kephart. The frosting on the cake is a collection of impressive images along the proposed trail presented by the famed Japanese landscape photographer, George Masa. The deal is set and the Southern route through Georgia from Mt. Oglethorpe is approved by ATC in a “unanimous vote of the full assembly.”¹

In an effort to promote the trail, Charlie Elliott enlists three local Boy Scouts to hike the entire Georgia section of the A.T. from the North Carolina line to Mt. Oglethorpe in the fall of 1930. The boys take 13 days to complete the task encountering several difficulties, but arriving in time to participate in a ceremony dedicating a large marble monument honoring General Oglethorpe, the founder of Georgia, and marking the southern terminus of the trail. The resulting publicity is a great success.^{1,8}



Boy scouts, Jim Brewer, Byron Mitchell, and John Newton salute flag

NORTH GEORGIA EVENTS

1929

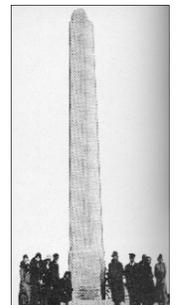


Union County residents Lenna, Clyde, Ethel, and Pearl Elliott on US 19/129 at Neel Gap. Sign reads: Blood Mountain Trail, 2 Mi to summit, 1 Mi to Flat Rock Gap

1930



Boy Scouts hike the newly opened A.T. in Georgia



Mt. Oglethorpe

NATIONAL EVENTS

NORTH GEORGIA EVENTS

1930

On November 1, 1930, the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club (GATC) is formed during a meeting at Zimmer's Mountain Lodge in Dahlonega. Speakers include Eddie Stone, Roy Ozmer, Charlie Elliott, and Bonnell Stone. Eddie Stone, selected as acting president, defines the purposes of the club: "To interest the public in nature and the out-of-doors and to set up congenial companionship between lovers of wild things, and to construct, maintain, and tramp the Georgia section of the Appalachian Trail and preserve it as a retreat from civilization." Approximately 25 people join the GATC at this initial meeting, including Warner Hall, who was to become the GATC president in 1931.^{1,8} Bonnell Stone of Blairsville is elected to an Advisory Committee and joins forces with Eddie Stone to approach the Vogel family about setting aside 12 acres as a state park in Neel Gap, laying the foundation for the state park system in Georgia.^{1,3}



GATC members prepare to hike Blood Mountain

1931



Myron Avery, Chairman of ATC, 1931-1952

Myron Avery is elected as chairman of ATC at the age of 31, a role he will hold until his death in 1952.

The 5th ATC Conference meets on June 12-14, 1931, in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, with over 200 people attending. The meeting helps build friendships and cooperation among the southern ATC member clubs.

1931

Early 1931 presents a crisis for the newly formed GATC when Eddie Stone learns of a Forest Service plan to construct a road along the crest of the mountains from Woody Gap to Hightower Gap, effectively obliterating over 12 miles of the newly constructed A.T. in Georgia. Stone undertakes a letter writing campaign to the Forest Supervisor, and eventually the Regional Forester who finally modifies the plan so that it impacts only slightly over five miles of trail. Legendary District Forest Ranger, Arthur Woody (also known as the Barefoot Ranger) was pushing for the construction of the roads along the ridge-tops.¹

Ranger Arthur Woody did an outstanding job of fire prevention, timber management, and game protection in the Chattahoochee National Forest, but his methods were occasionally "unorthodox." He is credited with restoring wildlife to north Georgia, especially white-tailed deer. He is also responsible for the preservation of Sosebee Cove containing approximately 152 acres and a stand of old-growth tulip poplar. When asked about his successes, he is reported to have said "I fish with the men, buy candy for the kids, and tell each and every woman, if I wasn't married, I'd sure like to make love to her." ^{1, page 25} Although he was an early member of the GATC, Woody's views on forest roads and trails, and the views of some of his successors, differed from goals of the GATC and Benton MacKaye to maintain a wilderness character to the A.T. corridor. This would be a source of occasional friction over the years.^{1,8}



Ranger Arthur Woody

NATIONAL EVENTS

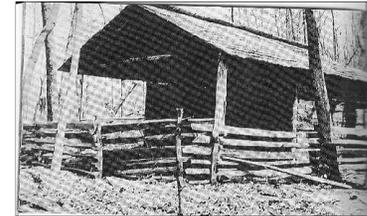
NORTH GEORGIA EVENTS

1931

The first annual meeting of the GATC is held on November 7-8, 1931, at Mitchell Mountain Ranch with lodging at Greear's Lodge in Helen, Georgia. The meeting includes a banquet and square dance and is a rousing success with over 70 people attending. Many more dedicated hikers join the club. Warner Hall is elected as incoming president of GATC. Caroline Greear, an early GATC member, operated Greear's Lodge along with her husband John. Because of the Greears' hospitality, the lodge becomes the meeting point of choice for many early GATC hikes and functions. It also serves as a gathering place and salon for authors, artists, and other intellectuals from far and wide. Union County's famed farmer-poet Byron Herbert Reece became a personal friend of the Greears and was an occasional guest in their home.^{1,11}



First Annual Meeting of the GATC at Greear's Lodge



First A.T. Shelter in Georgia is built at Amicalola Falls, 1931

The first A.T. shelter is constructed by GATC at Amicalola Falls at a cost of \$57.^{1,8} Split-rail fencing is installed to keep feral hogs from entering the shelter.

1932-1935

The energetic Warner Hall serves as GATC president from 1932 to 1935. Hall is described as "Red-headed, effervescent, where Warner led, the Club frolicked after."¹ Hall helps the Club develop strong friendships with the Smoky Mountain Hiking Club. He leaves an indelible mark on the GATC that will characterize the enthusiasm of Club members for years to come. Hall is credited with being the person responsible for protecting the magnificent stand of virgin trees that today is known as the Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest.



GATC members hire a bus for a hike from Woody Gap to Neel Gap

Under Warner Hall's leadership, the GATC takes many excursions to hard-to-reach places in Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee where members have never visited before. The club frequently hires a bus to transport members from Greear's Lodge and other meeting points to trail heads.



Benton MacKaye with GATC President Warner Hall

NATIONAL EVENTS

NORTH GEORGIA EVENTS

1932-1935

Another contribution by Warner Hall is the decision to design and cast a large bronze plaque to commemorate the A.T. In a collaborative effort among club members, GATC member Dr. George Noble, an Atlanta physician and sculptor, uses an image of Hall as the model for the sculpture. This image is eventually copyrighted by GATC and becomes the very distinctive emblem of the Club. The first of three plaques is installed by CCC personnel at Neel Gap in May 1934 with good newspaper coverage of the event.^{1,32b} Additional plaques are later installed at the trail head on Springer Mountain and at Unicoi Gap. Benton MacKaye, upon seeing a photograph of the plaque, writes that it is the “vigorous embodiment of the spirit of the Appalachian Trail.”^{1,32b}

Warner Hall serves as the model for the plaque



Bronze plaque - official symbol of the GATC

1932-1933



FDR

As the Great Depression worsens rapidly, throwing millions of people out of work and families of ordinary people into despair and suffering. Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) is elected President on November 8, 1932, promising a New Deal for the American people.

On March 4, 1933, as the nation suffers from the full impact of the Depression, FDR is inaugurated. In his inauguration speech he states “Our greatest primary task is to put people to work. This is no unsolvable problem if we face it wisely and courageously. . . .” On March 9, 1933, Roosevelt calls a meeting of the Secretaries of Agriculture, Interior, War, and other federal officers directing them to “co-ordinate plans for the proposed Civilian Conservation Corps.” On March 21, 1933, Roosevelt presents to Congress a proposal for an Emergency Conservation Work (ECW) program aimed at the relief of unemployment. He states “I propose to create a civilian conservation corps to be used for simple work, not interfering with normal employment, and confining itself to forestry. . . prevention of soil erosion, flood control. . . . This enterprise will conserve our precious natural resources. It will pay dividends to the present and future generations. . . . More important. . . will be the moral and spiritual value of such work.” On March 31, Roosevelt signs the ECW Act into law, thus launching “Roosevelt’s Tree Army” by establishing the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC).⁶

Within three months, 274,375 men are enrolled in over 1,300 CCC camps throughout the nation -- a remarkable feat of cooperation and coordination among federal agencies!⁶ By the time the CCC program ends in 1942, almost 3.5 million young men are enrolled in 4,500 camps nationwide.^{6,7,9}

For more information about the CCC see Appendix A.

NATIONAL EVENTS

NORTH GEORGIA EVENTS

1934-1935



Tea Room



Neel Gap Overnight Cabin



Mountain Crossing at Walasi-yi, Neel Gap - 2016

Constructed by the CCC between 1934 and 1935, the Blood Mountain Shelter has been in continuous use. It is an iconic structure on the A.T. and a welcome sight for north-bound hikers during their first few days on the trail.

Walasi-yi Center, built by the CCC in the mid-1930s, is the only place on the entire A.T. where the trail passes through a building. Originally operated as a Tea Room and Inn, the building has gone through many uses.



Walasi-yi under construction mid 1930s



1939



Mid -1940s



1951



Postcard from 1959

Today, the Walasi-yi Center at Neel Gap houses a well-respected outfitter and hiker hostel, Mountain Crossings. First operated as an outfitter by Jeff and Dorothy Hansen from 1983 to 2001, then by Winton Porter from 2001 – 2013, it has been operated by Georganna and Logan Seamon since 2013. Hundreds of would-be A.T. thru hikers find this a welcome stop to rest, get advice and resupply early in their hikes.



The Blood Mountain Shelter, photo courtesy of Van Hill

NATIONAL EVENTS

NORTH GEORGIA EVENTS

1938-1939

Women serve in important leadership roles in the early days of the GATC, and the Club adopts a rule that membership should not be dominated by either sex. In 1938, Cynthia Ward is elected the first of many women to serve as GATC President.^{1,8}



GATC at "The Cheese Factory", 1939¹⁴



GATC hikes to Tray Mountain, 1939¹⁴



Cynthia Ward, first of many women to serve as GATC President

The Cheese Factory is a favorite campsite along the Georgia section of the A.T. between Indian Grave Gap and Tray Mountain. It was home to a small dairy farm in the 1800s. The dairyman sold cheese from this site. No trace of the dairy remains.

1941-1945 The War Years

Because of spreading war in Europe and Asia during the late 1930s, the United States begins to prepare for hostilities prior to the official start of World War II (WWII). This results in many members of ATC and the local A.T. maintaining clubs being recruited into the military and transferred to other areas even before the war starts. On December 7, 1941, Japan attacks Pearl Harbor and on December 8, the United States declares war on Japan, officially entering WWII. With the actual start of the war, maintenance of the A.T. is suspended.

In 1942, with the war effort underway and the draft in operation, Congress votes to close the CCC program.

In 1945, WWII officially ends.

1941-1945

Many GATC men and women join in the war effort through active military service or in keeping the home fires burning. Rationing of gasoline, automobiles and tires, food, shoes, and other necessities severely limits any GATC activity and the Club goes essentially dormant during the war years.^{1,8}

1946

GATC member Lawrence Freeman returns from military service and plays a major role in revitalizing the GATC, scheduling outings for hiking, and re-opening the neglected A.T. route in Georgia. The Club is pleased to discover the trail in many areas already in relatively good condition, thanks to efforts by the Forest Service to clear and repair the trail.¹

NATIONAL EVENTS

1948



*Earl Shaffer,
August 1948*

In 1948, Earl V. Shaffer became the first to report a thru-hike, walking the entire Trail from Georgia to Maine. He was a World War II veteran. Part of the reason he was drawn to hike the A.T. was to "walk the Army out of his system." He chose to start in Georgia so he could, as he said, "walk north with spring." In 1965, he hiked again—this time from Maine to Georgia. On his third thru-hike, 50 years after his first, he became the oldest thru-hiker at age 79.^{2a,2b}

Eugene (Gene) Espy becomes the second person and the first Georgian to thru-hike the entire A.T. from Mt. Oglethorpe in Georgia to Mt. Katahdin in Maine. He completes his hike on September 30, 1951, and receives lots of local publicity for his accomplishment. He joins the GATC in October of 1951 and, as of 2016, has been a member for over 65 years.^{1,2b,18}

1955



Emma Gatewood

Emma "Grandma" Gatewood, at the age of 67, is the first woman to thru-hike the A.T. She becomes legendary for hiking in Keds tennis shoes and with minimal gear. She goes on to complete two additional thru-hikes.^{2b}

Encroachment of commercial development, vandalism, and chicken farming along the A.T. corridor near the southern terminus of the trail leads to unpleasant and unsanitary conditions for hikers. The GATC recommends moving the start of the A.T. from Mt. Oglethorpe to Springer Mountain within the protected boundaries of the Chattahoochee National Forest. In 1958, the ATC approves the relocation to Springer Mountain.^{1,8}

The Forest Service builds or replaces seven shelters along the Georgia Section of the A.T.⁸

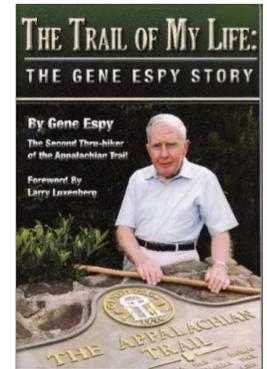
In 1961, GATC and ATC learn of plans by the National Park Service (NPS) to extend the Blue Ridge Parkway (BRP) along the crest of the Blue Ridge deep into Georgia, effectively obliterating most of the original route of the A.T. Although GATC vigorously opposes the proposal, plans for the BRP proceed and GATC starts working on contingency plans to relocate the A.T.^{1,8}

NORTH GEORGIA EVENTS

1951



Gene Espy in 1951



*Gene Espy publishes
his personal memoir
in 2008*

1956-1958

1959-1961

1961-1967

NATIONAL EVENTS

Congress authorizes the construction of the Richard B. Russell Scenic Highway through Tesnatee Gap and Hog Pen Gap. Although the GATC strongly objects to this new highway through pristine wilderness, the die is cast and the road is built and completed in 1967, forcing a relocation of the A.T. over Wildcat Mountain to Hog Pen Gap. The historic Tesnatee Gap Shelter is abandoned by the GATC.^{1, 8} Once completed, this well-designed highway becomes an attraction for tourists to the north Georgia mountains, improves access to the A.T. for hikers and volunteer maintainers, and is a welcome respite for thru-hikers in the early stages of their adventures.

1964

The Wilderness Act is passed and signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ) on September 3, 1964. This important legislation eventually protects over 109.5 million acres of federal lands in 44 states and Puerto Rico as “untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.”^{2b, 16a}

1968



President Johnson signs the National Trails System Act, October 2, 1968

Congress authorizes the BRP extension and passes the National Trails System Act. The bill is signed by LBJ, designating the A.T. the first “National Scenic Trail” and giving administrative responsibility for the trail to the NPS in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service.^{1, 2b, 16}



1968

Georgia Governor Jimmy Carter signs an agreement with the NPS protecting the A.T. in Georgia.¹⁰



1970-1975

As the war in Vietnam grinds on, funds to extend the BRP become scarce.

NORTH GEORGIA EVENTS

1961-1967



Road construction crew under the leadership of Bud Akins on the newly completed Richard Russell Scenic highway near Tesnatee Gap. The roof of the old Ponder Post Office is visible in the background.²⁷

NATIONAL EVENTS

NORTH GEORGIA EVENTS

1970-1979

Margaret Drummond is elected President of the GATC. Under her leadership the primary emphasis of GATC is shifted to trail maintenance. In 1979 she begins her 26 years of service on the ATC Board of Managers, including the position of Chair from 1989-1995. She becomes a founding member of the Benton MacKaye Trail Association (BMTA). She proves to be an effective leader in all that she undertakes and in 1997 is designated "Honorary Member of the ATC" – ATC's highest level of recognition. Shortly after her passing in 2015 at the age of 92, she is inducted into the Appalachian Trail Hall of Fame.^{2a,17a}



Margaret Drummond using a measuring wheel to lay out a section of the BMT

GATC and ATC continue to oppose the BRP extension that would devastate the A.T. in Georgia. Faced with this continued opposition, the NPS finally relents and abandons plans for the extension.

Approximately 40 miles of the A.T. in Georgia are incorporated into Federally Designated Wilderness Areas. This effectively blocks plans to extend Georgia Highway 400 through Neel Gap.⁸

1978



President Jimmy Carter

The National Scenic Trails Act is amended and signed by President Jimmy Carter on March 21, 1978. This important amendment accelerates land acquisition by the Department of Interior, helping to protect the A.T. corridor. It also explicitly emphasizes the important role of partnerships with volunteer organizations such as ATC in trail stewardship.^{2b}

1980

The legislation to extend the BRP is de-authorized by Congress.

1981

The route of the A.T. from Georgia to Maine is officially entered into the Federal Register.

1984

Responsibility for maintenance and management of the A.T. is delegated to ATC and member local volunteer maintaining clubs by the NPS.^{2b}

NATIONAL EVENTS

NORTH GEORGIA EVENTS

1980-1993

In 1993 a proposal to extend U.S. Highway 76 through Dick’s Creek Gap is opposed by GATC and ATC and ultimately defeated.⁸

1998

The Len Foote Hike Inn officially opens on October 30, 1998, as a sustainable backwoods lodge operated through cooperation between the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and the GATC for the purpose of education and recreation. In 2004, the facility receives a “Gold Level” LEEDS certification (LEEDS = Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design).^{17b} This unique “Hike Inn” may be reached after a pleasant five-mile hike from the top of Amicalola Falls. The rustic setting offers comfortable bunk beds and excellent family-style dining.

The Len Foote Hike Inn during a GATC Youth Outreach Event



2004



Marianne Skeen and Herb Daniel - GATC Youth Outreach Program starts under their leadership

GATC initiates a Youth Outreach Program, initially focusing on inner city youth in collaboration with the Atlanta Boys Clubs and Phoenix Boys Club. Over the years the program expands to include youth from schools and organizations in the mountain communities of north Georgia. The concept of youth outreach as a GATC mission is originated by Herb Daniel during his tenure as GATC President. Marianne Skeen is appointed as Chair of a newly formed “Outreach Committee” and under her leadership the program develops, grows, and expands. Marianne and Herb exemplify the outstanding service of volunteers within GATC and ATC serving in many important roles throughout their many years of GATC membership.^{17c,17d}

NATIONAL EVENTS

NORTH GEORGIA EVENTS

2004

Volunteers from GATC, the USFS, the Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition, 4-H Clubs, and other organizations help with GATC Outreach as hike leaders and as instructors in topics such as Leave No Trace, invasive plants, the history of the A.T., water quality indicators, and many other subjects. *Photos from GATC OUTREACH for UNION COUNTY SCHOOLS.*



GATC member, Jay Dement, discusses "Leave No Trace" with middle school students at Springer Mountain



USFS Recreation Manager, Taylor Hamilton, talks with students about the importance of our National Forests at Flat Rock Gap



GATC member, Pat Stelts, discusses invasive plants at Woody Gap



GATC member, David Stelts, discusses rare plants near the A.T. at Woody Gap



Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition Executive Director, Callie Moore, demonstrates water quality indicators at Woody Gap



Middle school students on GATC Outreach hike in Woody Gap



Union County Middle School students near Flat Rock Gap on the A.T.

NATIONAL EVENTS

2005

The Appalachian Trail Conference officially changes its name to Appalachian Trail Conservancy during the Johnson City, Tennessee, biennial meeting of 2005 to better reflect the important role of the ATC in protecting the A.T.

ATC initiates an Appalachian Trail Community Program to engage local communities close to the A.T. in public outreach programs for the recognition of the importance of the trail to the local economies, and trail stewardship.^{2a}



2007-2010

Bob Almand is elected Chair of the ATC Board of Directors in 2007, a position he holds until 2013. He is the second GATC member to serve in this capacity. Joining GATC in 1992, Bob quickly assumes a variety of leadership roles in the club and in the ATC.²⁹

Bob Almand (L), ATC Board Chairman, and David Startzell (R), ATC Executive Director, "Hike the Hill" in Washington, D.C. to advocate for the A.T. in 2010



In response to unpleasant encounters with bears by overnight hikers in the Blood Mountain Wilderness, USFS issues a rule to require the use of "Bear Canisters" for transporting food by overnight hikers.

2011-2012



Union County Sole Commissioner, Lamar Paris, accepts A.T. community designation

Blairsville / Union County and Dahlonega become the first officially designated A.T. Communities in Georgia. They are soon followed by Hiawassee / Towns County, Helen / White County, and Gilmer County as designated communities. A component of the A.T. Community Program is an A.T. Community Supporter program to encourage local businesses and civic organizations to support the concept of the A.T. Blairsville / Union County recruits nine businesses as A.T. Supporters between 2012 and 2016.



Color Guard at ceremony

NATIONAL EVENTS

NORTH GEORGIA EVENTS

2011-2012

The Blood Mountain Shelter has been repaired several times, most recently in 2011 - 2012 with a USFS approved, historically accurate, renovation funded by the Waterfall Foundation. The work is done entirely with hand tools and materials hauled to the site by mules and horses. The shelter is added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2012.



Blood Mountain Shelter during renovation



Possum, the mule



Blood Mountain Shelter after renovation, 2012

The USFS, Chattahoochee – Oconee National Forest (CONF), officially launches the CoTrails program as a collaborative effort among forest user groups to foster cooperation and stewardship of all recreational trails in the CONF. GATC, BMTA, Mountain High Hikers, and Georgia Forest Watch become active participants in the CoTrails initiative along with representatives of mountain biking groups, off-highway vehicle users, and equestrian trail riding groups.

2015-2016



*A Walk in the Woods
Now on DVD*

The movie “A Walk in the Woods” is released starring Robert Redford and Nick Nolte. The movie is based on the book of the same title by Bill Bryson. When the book was published in 1998, there was a large increase in thru hike attempts. ATC is concerned that the movie will have an even greater impact and place increased burden on the A.T. by novice thru-hikers and inexperienced day hikers. ATC initiates a voluntary thru-hiker registration program.

2015-2016

A “Children’s Forest” initiative is started as a collaborative effort among the USFS Blue Ridge Ranger District, the GATC Outreach Program, the Georgia Mountain Research and Education Center of Blairsville, the Greening Youth Foundation, the ATC, and Cabela’s Inc. The program is aimed at providing outdoor recreation opportunities for underserved children, especially minority children in urban settings. Initial funding is provided through a USFS grant under their “More Kids in the Woods” program.

NATIONAL EVENTS

NORTH GEORGIA EVENTS

2015-2016

With the increase in popularity of the A.T., overuse along some sections of the A.T. in Georgia becomes a problem. Inexperienced hikers short-cut the trail corridor on steep descents creating erosion problems. Unprepared hikers get into dangerous situations, especially in winter months, putting an unusual demand on local emergency medical and search-and-rescue resources. Shelters are frequently full, causing campsite degradation due to overuse of non-designated tenting sites. Moldering privies near shelter sites fill with human waste faster than volunteer maintainers can keep up. Inconsiderate hikers leave trash at campsites and in privies increasing the work of volunteers. In response, GATC and ATC increase the number of paid "Ridge Runners" in Georgia from one to four during peak season. The Blue Ridge Ranger District of the USFS adds an additional Trail Ranger as a part-time position. GATC institutes a program with volunteer "Trail Ambassadors" to counsel hikers on best practices and Leave No Trace ethics, and to look for potential problems. GATC in collaboration with the USFS experiments with commercially available biological agents in privies to accelerate the degradation of human waste and reduce odor. An example of GATC efforts to meet these challenges is the construction of thirty new camping pads and a new moldering privy near the Hawk Mountain shelter.^{30,31}



U.S. Army Rangers carry timbers for construction of a new privy at Hawk Mountain



Members of the U.S. Army 5th Ranger Training Battalion assist GATC and the USFS in hand transporting bear resistant food boxes for the Hawk Mountain camping area



GATC members Jerry Seabolt, Sam Smith, Mike Cordisco, and David Stelts, with high school senior Brandon Loudermilk building the new Hawk Mountain moldering privy



Finishing touches to the new Hawk Mountain moldering privy



The Future

Cooperation between the U.S. Forest Service and the National Park Service, and the long term commitment of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and the volunteers of the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club to the protection, maintenance, and stewardship of the A.T. in Georgia, ensures that the A.T. will meet the future challenges of increased usage and popularity. The A.T. is a national treasure – the nation’s first National Scenic Trail. This is the people’s trail to be enjoyed by generations to come!

Pictures of the Appalachian Trail in Georgia



Photo of GATC plaque at Neel Gap



Trail maintenance volunteers from GATC



View from trail



A.T. approach trail



Trail shelter



Neel Gap



View from trail



Trail marker



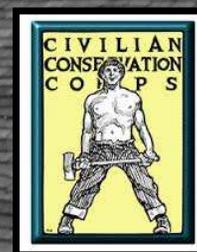
End of Georgia trail at Bly Gap

Appendix A

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and Development of the Appalachian Trail in North Georgia



"We Can Take It!" (CCC Motto)



The CCC was only in existence from 1933 to 1942, but in this brief interval, the program built men from boys and helped shape what would become the nation's first National Scenic Trail – the 2190 mile Appalachian Trail (A.T.).^{2a}



I propose to create a Civilian Conservation Corps to be used in simple work...More important, however, than the material gains will be the moral and spiritual value of such work.

— Franklin D. Roosevelt —

AZ QUOTES

Appendix A – CCC continued



FDR

The CCC Story

From 1929 to 1932, the Great Depression worsens rapidly, throwing millions of people out of work and families of ordinary people into despair and suffering. Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) is elected President on November 8, 1932, promising a New Deal for the American people.



FDR Inauguration

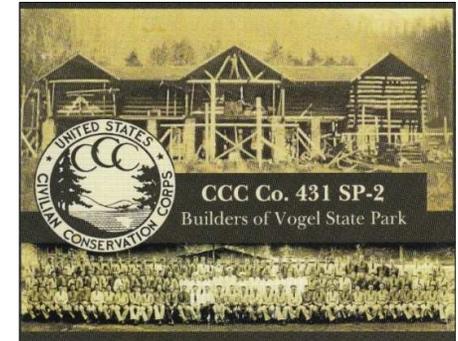
On March 4, 1933, as the nation suffers from the full impact of the Depression, FDR is inaugurated. In his inauguration speech he states “Our greatest primary task is to put people to work. This is no unsolvable problem if we face it wisely and courageously. . . .” On March 9, 1933, Roosevelt calls a meeting of the Secretaries of Agriculture, Interior, War, and other federal officers directing them to “co-ordinate plans for the proposed Civilian Conservation Corps.” On March 21, 1933, Roosevelt presents to Congress a proposal for an Emergency Conservation Work (ECW) program aimed at the relief of unemployment. He states “I propose to create a civilian conservation corps to be used for simple work, not interfering with normal employment, and confining itself to forestry. . . prevention of soil erosion, flood control. . . . This enterprise will conserve our precious natural resources. It will pay dividends to the present and future generations. . . . More important. . . will be the moral and spiritual value of such work.” On March 31, Roosevelt signs the ECW Act into law, thus launching “Roosevelt’s Tree Army” by establishing the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC).⁶

Within three months, 274,375 men are enrolled in over 1,300 CCC camps throughout the nation -- a remarkable feat of cooperation and coordination among federal agencies!⁶ By the time the CCC program ends in 1942, almost 3.5 million young men are enrolled in the program nationwide in 4,500 camps.^{6,7,9}

Appendix A – CCC continued

In Georgia, CCC enrollment from 1933 – 1942 totals 78,630 men in an estimated 127 camps throughout the state. These men are credited with planting nearly 25,000,000 trees in Georgia alone, reforesting mountainsides previously denuded by unsustainable tree harvesting, and controlling erosion in parts of the state where poor farming practices degraded soil quality. In many areas of north Georgia, the beautiful stands of mountain laurel, rhododendron, hemlocks, and hardwood trees that we enjoy today are the product of the effort by these CCC men to repair years of neglect and exploitation of our natural resources.^{6,7,9}

Shortly after the CCC program is initiated, recruitment of enrollees and construction of CCC camps moves into high gear. Many of the camps are established with tents to house the recruits. Eventually, in the more permanent camps, tents are replaced by barracks, mess halls, and recreational and educational facilities. Camps are under the command of Army officers who are responsible for camp operations and discipline. The actual work performed by the boys is supervised by civilian Georgia Forest Service Camp Superintendents. Usually this arrangement works well, but occasionally military-versus-civilian conflicts develop over issues such as promotions and hiring.^{32a,32b}



The Blood Mountain Shelter, photo courtesy of Van Hill

In North Georgia, the boys of CCC Camp Enotah (CCC Co. 431 SP-2) immediately begin construction of the cabins and other facilities, including the dam and lake, at what would become Vogel State Park, one of Georgia's most popular. They are responsible for construction of the beautiful stone building that housed the Walasi-yi Inn at Neel Gap. The boys of Camp Enotah and Camp Woody participate in the construction of the Blood Mountain Shelter.²⁵ The difficulty of construction of this native stone building on the summit of Blood Mountain (el. 4458 feet) is described in monthly narrative reports by Camp Superintendent J. P. Baskins from 1934 through 1935 who tells of hauling cement, sand, water, roofing tiles, and timbers 2 miles over a tractor trail with an average grade of 10% to the top of Blood Mountain.^{32b} CCC boys help with construction of other shelters and portions of the A.T. in Georgia, but the Blood Mountain Shelter is the only one remaining.⁷ J.P. Baskin's report of April-May 1935 mentions the planting of nearly 50,000 plants at Vogel and at Neel Gap!^{32b}

A.T. Rocky Knob Shelter built by CCC, 1934



Appendix A – CCC continued

431ST CO. CCC, CAMP ENOTAH, GA SP-2, BLAIRSVILLE, GEORGIA

WILLIS R. GIVENS, CAPT. 322 ND INF., COMMANDING

R. R. PEREZ, 1ST LT. 560TH F.A. -- LILLARD MITCHELL, 1ST LT. 317TH F.A. -- CHARLES O. BAIRD, C.E.A. -- MURLIN NESTER, M.D., CONTRACT SURGN
FRANKLIN J. COOPER, F.E.R.A. TEACHER



CCC Company 431, Camp Enotah, Blairsville, GA³⁸



CCC Neel Gap Company 431, 1934³⁴

Appendix A – CCC continued

CCC Boys become CCC Men



Bathhouse constructed at Lake Winfield Scott by CCC

Recruitment: The ability of the CCC to recruit such large numbers of young men from the very start is a reflection of the pent-up demand for jobs and the dire straits of many families due to the depression. Recruits come from urban and rural areas and includes blacks as well as whites. Most camps are segregated, reflecting the racial discrimination of the time. The training and work the men are assigned represents hard physical labor and as a result rural boys fare better than city boys, as most are already accustomed to the rigors of farm and forest work.^{6, 7, 9} A quote from CCC boy Woodrow Grant assigned to Camp Enotah at Vogel State Park reflects the views of men from rural backgrounds:

“I’d been in the CCC only a few days when a fellow tried to talk me into going over the hill. He said, ‘I can’t take it anymore, they’re working us like slaves!’ I said, ‘Work? I feel like I’m on vacation!’”⁶

The desire to join the CCC was so strong that some recruits may have stretched the truth a bit and gotten some help from friends. Clyde Hawkins, of Suches, Georgia, who was assigned to Co. 1404 GA F-1, Suches, tells in an interview in late 2015:



Clyde Harkins, Suches, GA, 2015

“I was 15 years old when I joined the CCC. . . . I told them I was 18. . . . I weighed 109 pounds, and I was the lightest fellow who went in at F-1 down here at Suches at that time. . . . Ranger Woody was a good friend of the family. . . that could have had something to do with [my getting into the CCC]. [Ranger Woody told me when I came to sign up] that I could never make it. I said ‘Ranger if you could help me, I could make it.’ [Later after signing up and going through the medical exam] That evening [when Ranger Woody] saw me [wearing a uniform] that would fit a 200-pound man. . . he yelled at me. . . ‘You made the camp, you made it!’”²⁵
One of Clyde’s first jobs with the CCC was using a 16-pound sledge hammer to break up large rocks for the crusher. He later did road work, helped to build the Blood Mountain Shelter, and worked on trails.

“Dollar a Day Men” – Enrollment in the CCC is a boon to many struggling families as the recruits are paid \$30 per month of which \$25 is automatically sent home. The \$5 per month the boys are allowed to keep may be spent on incidentals at small camp commissaries or locally while on leave.

Food, Shelter, Recreation – A review of monthly inspection reports from the CCC Camp at Vogel State Park reveals the typical quantity and quality of food provided to the CCC boys in large mess halls. Many of the recruits arrive at camp undernourished. Daily meals of ample and quality food, physical training, hard work, and varied recreation programs that include baseball, basketball, volleyball, hiking, swimming, boxing, and other sports help the boys to strengthen and bulk up. They sleep in military style barracks buildings and most of the boys are grateful to have the luxury of “three squares and a flop.”^{6,7,32a}

Clothing – Provided with military-style work and dress uniforms, some recruits find themselves clothed for the first time in manufactured or “store bought” garments and shoes. Dressed in uniform, boys develop a sense of pride at being called “CCC Boys.”

Appendix A – CCC continued

Education – Life in CCC camps includes educational opportunities for the recruits. Inspection reports reveal that they were offered classes in subjects such as math, reading, writing, citizenship, English, mechanical drawing, social etiquette, and vocational skills such as metalworking, carpentry, and electricity. Some boys arrive nearly illiterate with little formal education, but leave with the equivalent of an 8th grade education.^{6,7,32a}

Local Experienced Men – With the start of the CCC program, there is an immediate need for men with experience to train green recruits and supervise work projects. Experienced foresters from all over the country are contacted by telegram offering them jobs.³³ Local civilian personnel with experience in carpentry, masonry, plumbing, and other trades are sought out and hired to help train the men and direct the work. These men are called Local Experienced Men or “LEMs.” The work benefitted the LEMs too, and a list of CCC LEMs at Vogel State Park includes surnames such as Akins, Collins, Martin, Wellborn, Spiva, and Duckworth – names well known to Union County residents as solid citizens and leaders of the community who had the advantage of CCC experience.^{32a,32b}



Blairsville resident Geri O'Brien, whose father, Benton Efird, served as a cook at the CCC camp at Vogel and helped build the Blood Mountain Shelter. Geri's parents met at a CCC dance. She has shared CCC pictures from her family album:

Local connections – Many recruits had never traveled far from home prior to their CCC assignments in parts of the country they had never been to before. Like the war experiences many will endure later, this exposure to new places and people broadens their outlooks, and some return to live in these new places. The CCC program allows the boys opportunities to visit near-by towns and they are welcomed by local merchants as a new source of income. Most CCC camps include social programs that allow the young men to meet local people. Some of the most popular activities were monthly dances at the CCC camps which include attendance by local residents. The July 1935 Project Report from Camp Superintendent Baskin at Vogel State Park references the most recent dance where “the conduct of enrollees was extremely gratifying.” The boys receive praise from the Commanding Officer that it was the best CCC dance he had attended, and “commending every man present upon his gentlemanly conduct.”^{32a,32b} Recruits were not married, but these social interactions inevitably led to some romances and eventual marriages. An example is referenced in writings by Ethelene Dyer Jones that Byron Herbert Reece’s brother T.J. joined the CCC and eventually married Union County’s Lorena Duckworth. Reece’s sister, Emma Jean, met and married Master Sergeant Thomas Daniel Rispoli, who later was stationed at CCC Camp Enotah.^{5b,13}



Mess Hall at Vogel



CCC Boys show off their muscles



CCC Uniforms for going to town



Benton Efird and three other cooks at Vogel



Benton Efird - bare-chested in ice at Fontana Dam construction site

Appendix A – CCC continued



Bud Akins – President of Union County Historical Society 2011-2015

“I know that the CCC fed many a family in this county and in this area. . . . The people were so blessed to have that. [The CCC] was President Roosevelt’s favorite project because he knew that [he put millions] of people in the United States to work with the CCC. . . . All my life, ever since I was old enough to understand what life was all about, I’ve heard people talk about [working for the CCC]. . . . Thank goodness for the CCC in this area – we survived.” (Bud Akins)²⁷



D.L. Martin, Born 1921

“I went in [to the CCC] as an ordinary recruit and stayed 22 months. I guess I was lucky. . . . I moved up and became supply sergeant and [finally] mess sergeant. I made big money – I made \$45 a month! I took some [medical technician] courses while with the CCC that helped me [get on] with the TVA. They hired me as a medical technician with TVA and when I left, I went into the Navy as a medical technician. . . . I was one year with the Navy, and three years with the Marines. I learned how to dodge a bullet. . . six islands we took from the Japs. . . . It was combat. . . I was on the front lines with the First Marine Division. My training while in the CCC gave me Medical Technician qualification. We made the first offensive landing of WWII on Guadalcanal. [We were also on] Cape Gloucester, New Britain, New Guinea. . . .

We had a 90% casualty rate so we went to Melbourne, Australia, to rebuild the Division. Not all were from enemy fire. . . most were from malaria. . . . I had malaria 15 times, 4-5 times after I got out. . . .

[After I got back to Union County, I helped to start] the first Chamber of Commerce, the first football team, the first industry. . . the dress factory. I’m not bragging but I’ve done alright. . . .” (D.L. Martin)²⁴

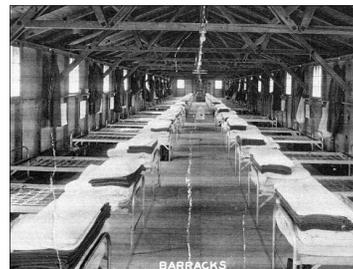
Fannin County historian, Keith Jones, has provided photos from CCC Camp Lawrence W. Young, GA F-13, Higdon Store, Georgia, located in Fannin County near the start of the A.T.²⁰



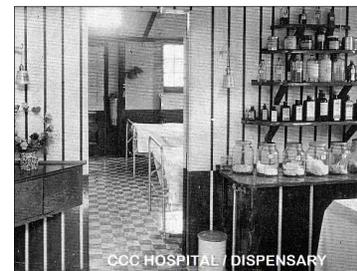
MESS HALL



READING ROOM



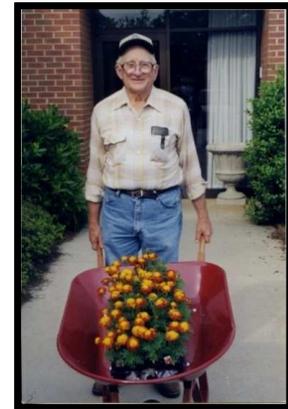
BARRACKS



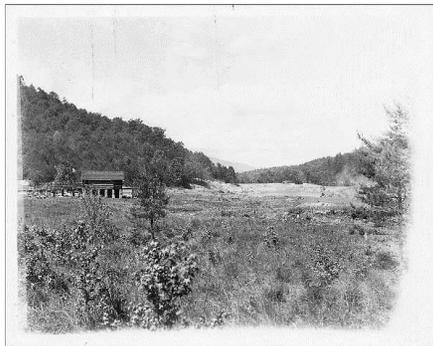
CCC HOSPITAL / DISPENSARY

Appendix A – CCC continued

After the CCC – The CCC experience helps to ready thousands of young men physically and mentally for the demands of WWII. In the CCC camps they become accustomed to discipline, learn personal responsibility, and develop leadership skill. The CCC field work conditions their bodies and minds to hard physical effort and enduring difficult conditions, and teaches them essential skills, trades, and ingenuity. The reputation of CCC boys as hard workers helps them get civilian work after their CCC time. Mr. Wayne Henderson in a 2015 interview tells of arriving at a TVA dam construction recruiting site in Murphy, North Carolina, wearing a CCC jacket. The recruiting foreman took one look at him and said “You were in the CCC. You know how to work! You’re hired!”²³



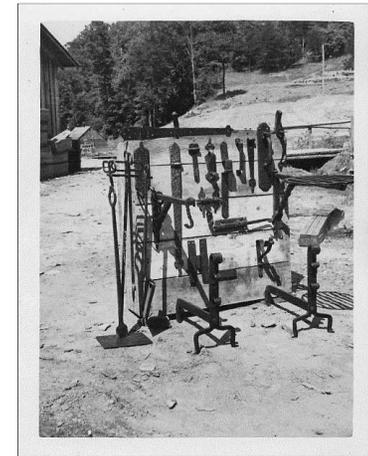
Wayne Henderson



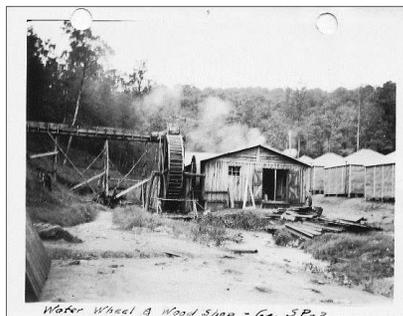
Vogel Park construction: bathhouse on left, lake, dam and spillway in the distance, 1935



Reading room, Camp Enotah



Tools fashioned in the blacksmith shop



Water wheel and wood shop



Typical sign and rhododendrons

Summary – The boys who joined the CCC became men through their experiences. To this day, the surviving men of the CCC prefer to be called “CCC Boys.” In North Georgia, and all along the A.T. their work endures in structures on and near the trail and in many places with the treadway itself built or improved by their efforts.

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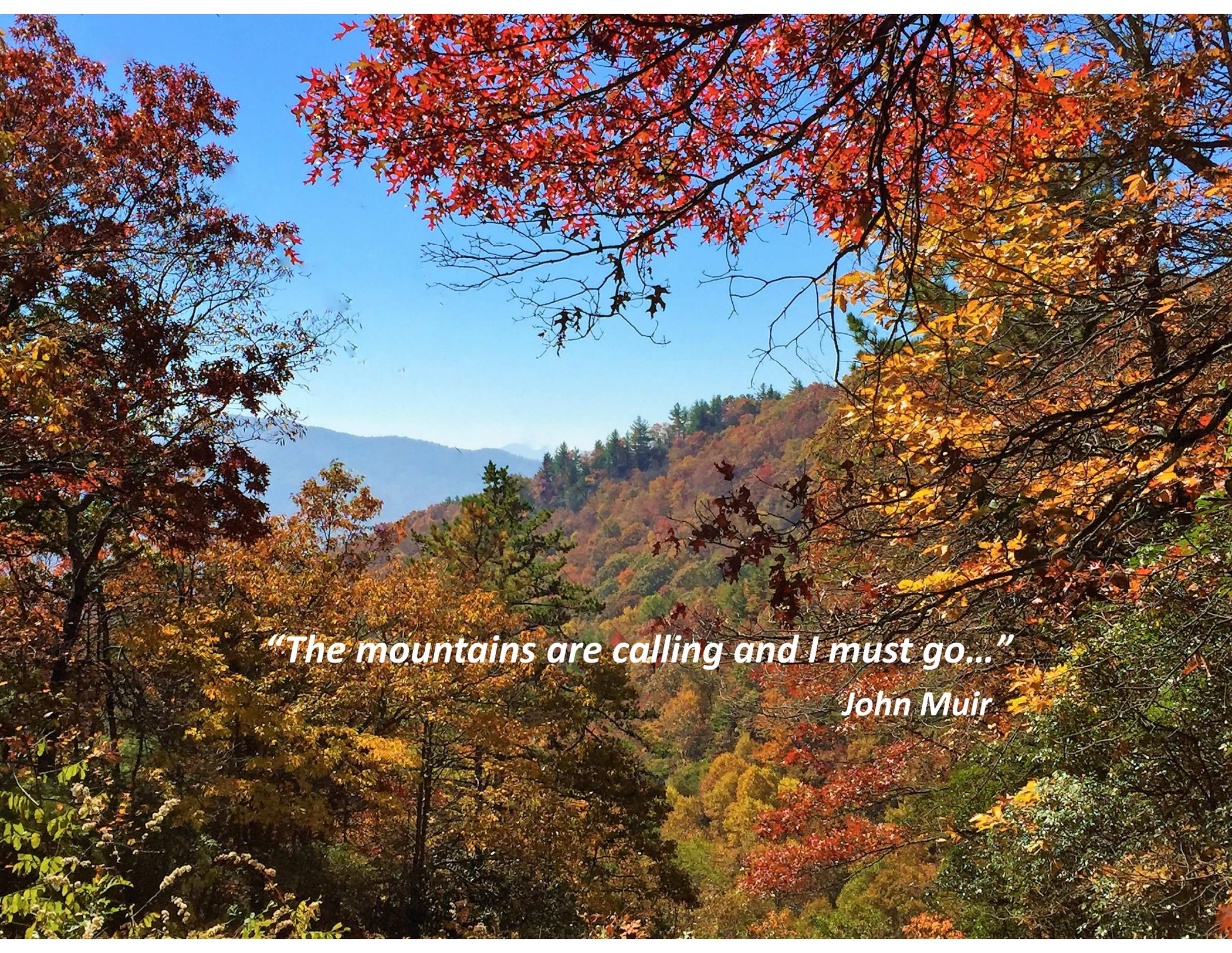
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"The mountains are calling and I must go..."

John Muir