



TRAIL YEARS

A History of the Appalachian

Trail Conference



Appalachian Trailway
News

Special 75th Anniversary Issue

Trail Years

By Brian B. King



It's 1925. Birth year of Paul Newman, Bobby Kennedy, Margaret Thatcher, Pol Pot, and B.B. King. And television. "Oscar" hasn't been born yet, but Charlie Chaplin is working on "The Gold Rush." In Germany, just out of prison, Adolf Hitler is completing *Mein Kampf* and reorganizing the Nazi party. Josef Stalin is neutralizing Leon Trotsky. Ho Chi Minh is forming the Vietnamese Nationalist Party. Picasso is working on his trend-breaking "La Danse" in Paris, Theodore Dreiser is wrapping up *An American Tragedy*, and H.L. Mencken is raving on in Baltimore. The United States population is less than half that of today.

It's March. The first issue of *The New Yorker* has just been published, and the "Jazz Age" wake-up call of *The Great Gatsby* is just about to be. Al Capone takes over the Chicago mob. The worst tornado in American history kills up to seven hundred people in the Midwest. Tennessee bans the teaching of evolutionary theory, setting the stage for one of the first major nonelection news events covered by radio, the Scopes Trial.

It's the first week of March in Washington, D.C. Most of the official side of town is absorbed with preparations for the inauguration of Calvin Coolidge, who became president when the scandal-plagued Warren Harding died in office, and who has just won the 1924 "Keep Cool with

Coolidge" election. J. Edgar Hoover is shaking up the Federal Bureau of Investigation he has recently been named to direct and is trying to manage the resurgent Ku Klux Klan, reaching its zenith of strength. Also at their zeniths are the jazz clubs of Harlem and Chicago's South Side.

It's Monday, March 2, at the grand Raleigh Hotel, which stands roughly midway between Mr. Coolidge's White House and the east portico of the Capitol where Chief Justice William Howard Taft will administer the oath of office on Wednesday. At 2:15 p.m., perhaps two dozen people—mostly men, mostly from points north—sit down at the hotel in a meeting room off the spare but marble-appointed lobby.

They have come to discuss an idea—a dream, really—that has caught their imagination and that actually appears feasible: the Appalachian Trail. It is a work in progress, a product of volunteerism. To realize it, they form an organization that will become the Appalachian Trail Conference.

In reviewing the seventy-five-year history of the organization they inaugurated that day, what becomes clear is that it is a history of eras more than of personalities: first, building a continuous Trail; second, protecting that Trail with a "Trailway"; third, managing and promoting that Trail as a major American public recreational resource and oasis of natural eastern-mountain resources.

Those eras have not been mutually exclusive periods. Instead, a cross-section of that history might look more like a marble cake, with a particular goal growing for several years and then diminishing as others grow—never completely vanishing. Moreover, the organization's leadership, particularly

after the pioneer period when personalities did dominate it, never has seemed to stop asking, "What do we do next...without compromising what we have already done?"



(Above) The Raleigh Hotel, Washington, D.C. (Top of page) Lobby of the hotel. (Library of Congress)



The Era of Trail-Building

"The first Appalachian Trail Conference was called...for the purpose of organizing a body of workers (representative of outdoor living and of the regions adjacent to the Appalachian range) to complete the building of the Appalachian Trail. This purpose was accomplished," say the minutes, apparently written by the New England dreamer whose grand idea was being realized that March afternoon, Benton MacKaye.

It was a time of associations and federations, all eager to improve mankind's lot: The Regional Planning Association of America, of which MacKaye was a member, had asked the Federated Societies on Planning and Parks to call the meeting. The latter was a coalition of the American Civic Association, the American Institute of Park Executives and American Park Society, and the National Conference on State Parks. Its president, Frederic A. Delano, described it as "a pooling of common interests and not a compromise of conflicting interests," an explanation later used to explain the relationship between the Appalachian Trail Conference and autonomous Trail-maintaining clubs and their volunteers.

MacKaye had spent most of the previous four years proselytizing in behalf of the Appalachian Trail project he had proposed in his October 1921 article in the *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* (see box on page 5). His essay, "An Appalachian Trail: A Project in Regional Planning," was classic early 20th-century American utopianism—half-pragmatic and half-philosophical, fully in keeping with the intellectual climate of the urban East following World War I. It reacted to the shocks of the war and the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and to the emerging technologies of petroleum, petrochemicals, and pharmaceuticals after nearly a century of rapid industrialization. A close reading reveals an ambitious social and political agenda for an America on the post-war move, not just a hiking trail.

MacKaye (pronounced "Ma-Kye," rhyming with "sky"), a lean, wiry, highly active 42-year-old Yankee's Yankee, plainly didn't like where America was moving—especially by motor vehicle and especially into ever more crowded cities. He had first outlined his proposal's possibilities as a turn-of-the-century undergraduate working in what would become the East's first national forest in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. He would continue that work as a graduate forestry student at Harvard University and as a land-acquisition researcher and forester under the renowned Gifford Pinchot, first chief of the U.S. Forest Service and a key MacKaye mentor. By the 1920s, when both he and Pinchot had been exiled from the Forest Service, he presented the Trail concept as "a new approach to the problem of living," a means both "to reduce the day's drudgery" and to improve the quality of American leisure.

Though MacKaye's article clearly began the A.T. project, the idea of a long trail running along the Appalachians did not emerge overnight, in isolation.

ATN

APPALACHIAN TRAILWAY NEWS



Editor: Robert A. Rubin

Cover photos—Clockwise from top: A.T. maintainers secure the first A.T. sign on Katahdin in 1935; Benton MacKaye and Myron Avery in an undated photograph from Avery's scrapbook; frequent A.T. thru-hiker Warren Doyle adds his particular artistry to the science of measuring the Trail; A.T. supporters at the 1928 conference take a trolley excursion. **Back cover:** 1916 Sunderland Place, shared headquarters for ATC and the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club from 1947 through 1967.

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The Era of Trail-Building . . .



Early “trampers,” Catherine E. Robbins, Hilda M. Kurth, and Kathleen M. Norris, in a 1927 brochure published by the Central Vermont Railway promoting the Long Trail. Ironically, it was highways, not railways, that made access to distant trailheads possible. (ATC Archives)

The first two decades of the century had seen the emergence not only of forest conservation, but also of a strong hiking or “tramping” movement in New England and New York. A broad array of path-building efforts by small clubs in New England and New York’s Hudson River valley was underway. Many who spearheaded those efforts also dreamed of a “grand trunk” trail, stretching the entire length of the eastern Appalachian ridge lands. And, those dreamers got together from time to time.

In late 1916, the New England Trail Conference (NETC) met for the first time to coordinate the work of that region’s trail-making agencies and clubs. Behind that meeting were James P. Taylor, the guiding spirit of Vermont’s Long Trail, columnist Allen Chamberlain of the *Boston Evening Transcript*, a hiker and past president of the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC), and New Hampshire forester Philip W. Ayres, a major force behind establishment of the White Mountain National Forest.

Laura and the late Guy Water-

man, ATC members whose 1980s book, *Forest and Crag*, traced the history of northeastern trail-building, attribute the feverish activity of this period in New England and New York–New Jersey to the emergence of the automobile. It changed the pattern of trail-building from loops and mountain climbs centered on particular mountain vacation spots to through-trails connecting mountain ranges—simply because hikers now could more easily travel to other, less-developed trailheads.

The “Big One”

All that activity is one part of what led to the A.T.—“the big one” in eastern trail-building circles—culminating many years of trail-builders’ hopes and plans. The other is, of course, MacKaye himself. It was his full-length proposal that came to fruition.

For MacKaye, as with any celebrated dreamer, philosopher, or grand visionary, personal history had necessarily become integral to his thinking (see box, page 5).

In a 1964 message to the sixteenth

Appalachian Trail conference, MacKaye said his “dream...may well have originated” at the end of a hike to the peak of Vermont’s Stratton Mountain in July 1900. Climbing to the top of a tree for better views, he wrote, “I felt as if atop the world, with a sort of ‘planetary feeling’.... Would a footpath someday reach [far-southern peaks] from where I was then perched?” MacKaye in his later years was not consistent in his recollections of the source of the A.T. idea. However, his biographer, Larry Anderson, notes that most of his accounts indicate the idea did evolve to a marked extent from his turn-of-the-century hikes and backcountry explorations.

It would be a mistake to assume that MacKaye was advocating a hiking utopia—although he did cast his idea in terms of a footpath and he did relish the outdoors and relatively short hikes and backpacking trips. Yet, hiking for its own sake, as recreation or a means to personal fulfillment, was not the goal he espoused.

MacKaye’s whole work product after college tells the story of a man seeking

to offset what he saw as the harm that rapid mechanization and urbanization inflicts on mankind. He sought regeneration of the human spirit through a sort of harmony with primeval influences. To him, walking was a means to an end—an intermediate end of understanding what he termed the “forest civilization,” which in turn was the means of understanding human civilization.

Then, on April 18, 1921, while in New York City, his life took a sudden turn. MacKaye’s wife of four years—Jessie Belle Hardy Stubbs, a prominent and forceful woman-suffragist the decade before—jumped to her death into the East River. She had run to the bridge from Grand Central Station, where she had just been at his side; they had been buying tickets to the country where she, often depressed, could rest.

Not having any children of his own,

MacKaye constructed for the rest of his life a new, alternative family of professional associates, the men and women who would build the Trail, and leading urban-life theorist Lewis Mumford. They also included attorney Harvey Broome (his surrogate son, in the eyes of some) and the other conservationists with whom he would found The Wilderness Society in the 1930s. But, more immediately, MacKaye was depressed and unproductive. His friend, editor Charles Harris Whitaker, urged him to come to New Jersey and stay with him until he worked his way through his grief.

That summer, on Sunday, July 10, 1921, MacKaye was at the Hudson Guild Farm in Netcong in the New Jersey Highlands with Whitaker to meet Clarence Stein, chairman of the committee on community planning of the Washington-based American Institute of Architects. To-

gether, they began work on the essay that MacKaye would publish in Whitaker’s *Journal*.

“On that July Sunday half a century ago, the seed of our Trail was planted,” MacKaye told ATC Chairman Stanley A. Murray nearly fifty years later. “Except for the two men named, it would never have come to pass.”

Why did MacKaye’s proposal take off when other northeasterners’ did not? At least for the period of the 1920s, a three-part answer can be suggested.

First, MacKaye’s was a grander—and thus more inspiring—vision uncomplicated by practical, field-level details and, until later, “action plans.”

Second, his article is replete with hints about the publicity value of one aspect of the proposal or another, which he intended to exploit and was encouraging supporters to exploit as well. As his bi-

Benton MacKaye

Benton MacKaye, born in 1879 in Stamford, Connecticut, was the sixth child and last son of then-famous playwright, actor, and inventor (James) Steele MacKaye and the former Mary Ellen (Mollie) Keith Medberry, described by the curator of the family’s papers as “fully equal to her husband’s creativity, daring, and flamboyance.”

From the time he was nine, MacKaye began living year-round at the family retreat in rural Shirley Center, Massachusetts, and wandering the countryside, alone or under the guidance of a neighboring farmer. His genius father was often away on the call of the theatre life. He lost one older brother at age ten, his father at age fifteen.

At age fourteen, he began an intensive, documented countryside exploration, compiling a journal of nine “expeditions”—combining walking with investigation of the natural environment—on which a 1969 MacKaye book, *Expedition Nine*, was based.

Four years later, in 1897, he had that first taste of wilderness he would recall as the genesis of his A.T. notions: bicycling from Boston with college friends to Tremont Mountain in New Hampshire and then hiking into the backcountry. He saw it then as “a second world—and promise!”

After Harvard, in 1905, he joined the new U.S. Forest Service under Gifford Pinchot. MacKaye later recalled a meeting of the Society of American Foresters at Pinchot’s home in “about 1912” to which he read a new paper by his friend Allen Chamberlain of AMC. “[It] was, I think, the first dissertation on long-distance footways,” he wrote.

By his early thirties, MacKaye’s focus shifted from science, woodlot management and other aspects of silviculture, to the humanities: the effect of resource management on humans. The discipline that would later be called “regional planning” seemed best to capture his interests.

In 1920, he began a lifelong association with Charles Harris Whitaker, editor of the *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* and a proponent of the “garden cities” or “new towns” in vogue in English planning circles that would not become as popular in the United States until the 1960s and 1970s. Before he published his Appalachian Trail proposal, they worked together on a regional plan for seven Northern Tier states that involved “new towns”

clustered near raw materials and power sources, connected to consuming towns by postal roads: a calculated use of resources, with a social and economic conscience.



A young Benton MacKaye (ATC Archives)

The Era of Trail-Building . . .

ographer Larry Anderson has shown (see article on page 17), with help from former mentors, he courted reporters and columnists who would give the idea more general exposure.

Third, he, Stein, and Whitaker worked their social and professional connections vigorously. A cover note by Stein on reprints of MacKaye's article noted the foundations already laid for a north-south through-trail by AMC, the Green Mountain Club, and others in the New England Trail Conference, a new AMC chapter in Asheville (which became the independent Carolina Mountain Club in June 1923), the success of the Palisades Interstate Parkway in New York and New Jersey, and the more utopian cooperative farms and camps being developed in New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

From 1921 to 1925, MacKaye split his time exploring two connected, but ultimately distinct roles: as the originator of the Appalachian Trail idea, and as one of the early practitioners of what would be called "regional planning"—big-picture thinking about landscape and community. As Larry Anderson shows, his networking and persistence during this four-year period was crucial to getting the first conference together at the Raleigh Hotel that Monday in March 1925.

The First Conference

The conferees spent that first afternoon talking about the potential of the A.T. project, with MacKaye leading off.

"Its ultimate purpose is to conserve, use, and enjoy the mountain hinterland," he said. "The Trail (or system of trails) is a means for making the land accessible. The Appalachian Trail is to this Appalachian region what the Pacific Railway was to the Far West—a means of 'opening up' the country. But a very different kind of 'opening up.' Instead of a railway we want a 'trailway'....

"Like the railway, the trailway should be a functioning service,"

MacKaye continued. "It embodies three main necessities: (1) shelter and food (a series of camps and stores); (2) conveyance to and from the neighboring cities, by rail and motor; (3) the footpath or trail itself connecting the camps.

"But, unlike the railway, the trailway must preserve (and develop) a certain en-



Major William A. Welch presided over the first A.T. conference. (*New York Times*)

vironment. Otherwise, its whole point is lost. The railway 'opens up' a country as a site for civilization; the trailway should 'open up' a country as an escape from civilization.... The path of the trailway should be as 'pathless' as possible; it should be the minimum consistent with practical accessibility.

"But, railway and trailway, each one is a way—each 'goes somewhere,' MacKaye concluded. "Each has the lure of discovery—of a country's penetration and unfolding. The hinterland we would unfold is not that from Cape to Cairo, but that from Maine to Georgia."

The group agreed to his suggestion that the trail-building effort be divided into five regions, with one or two particular sections to focus on within each. He

thought it could all be done within fifteen months, in time for the United States' 150th anniversary.

Others spoke of specific aspects' potentials—many still resonate today. Francois E. Matthes of the U.S. Geological Survey foresaw both nature-guide and historic-guide services. For him, the minutes recalled, the ultimate purpose of the A.T. was "to develop an environment wherein the people themselves (and not merely their experts) may experience—through contact and not mere print—a basic comprehension of the forces of nature (evidence in forest growth, in water power, and otherwise) and of the conservation, use, and enjoyment thereof."

Fred F. Schuetz of the Scout Leaders Association, who would spend the rest of his life involved with ATC, extolled "tributary trails" from cities to the ridgecrests. Arthur C. Comey, secretary of the New England Trail Conference, gave a little workshop on "going light," so that "the knapsack should serve as an instrument and not an impediment in the art of outdoor living."

Clarence Stein closed that session with the regional planners' view of the situation: "two extreme environments... the city and the crestline.... The further 'Atlantis' [the growing East Coast megalopolis] is developed on the one hand, the greater the need of developing 'Appalachia' on the other."

With the Trail route more advanced in New England, New York, and New Jersey, the meeting concentrated the next morning on the other regions. Clinton S. Smith, forest supervisor of the Cherokee National Forest, showed the possibilities allowed by Forest Service trails systems in the central and southern Appalachians, while others addressed the challenges of a trail in the two proposed national parks and the areas between. Pennsylvania and Maryland possibilities were also addressed.

The Trail's "main line" under the plans adopted at that meeting would run an estimated 1,700 miles from Mt. Wash-



ington in New Hampshire to Cohutta Mountain in Georgia. Extensions were proposed to Katahdin in Maine, in the north, and, in the south, to Lookout Mountain in Tennessee and then to Birmingham, Alabama. “Branch lines” were projected on the Long Trail in Vermont, from New Jersey into the Catskills, from Harpers Ferry toward Buffalo, from the Tennessee River into Kentucky, and from Grandfather Mountain in North Carolina toward Atlanta.

After a luncheon speech by National Park Service Director Stephen Mather, an advocate of trails in parks, the business part of the meeting was called to order by its chairman, Major William Welch of New York’s Palisades Interstate Park. In short order, the Conference was made a permanent body (although it would be almost twelve years before it would be incorporated as such) and a provisional constitution was adopted. That constitution, written by MacKaye, provided for management of ATC affairs by a fifteen-member executive committee—two from each region and five chosen at large.

The chairmanship was awarded to Welch, who was just past the midpoint of a career with the Palisades Park that would earn him renown as father of New York’s state park movement. MacKaye was elected field organizer, outdoor columnist and New York–New Jersey Trail Conference advocate Raymond Torrey was appointed treasurer, and Harlean James, already executive secretary of the Federated Societies on Planning and Parks, was appointed secretary (a position she would hold for the next sixteen years).

The composition of that initial executive committee underscores the sort of collaboration that became a key tradition of the Trail. Some have viewed it as an experiment in participatory democracy, others have called it cooperative management of national resources, and still others have described it as a unique partnership between the public and private sectors.

In addition to the five regional divisions of the Conference, seats on the committee were specifically allocated to Col. W.B. Greeley, chief of the U.S. Forest Service, and Pisgah National Forest Super-

visor Verne Rhoades, who was named vice chairman. (In the 1930s, the U.S. Forest Service chief and the National Park Service director would be honorary vice chairmen or vice presidents of ATC.) Other seats were allotted to the Regional Planning Association, the Federated Societies, and the National Conference on Outdoor Recreation. Comey and Charles P. Cooper of Rutland, Vermont, held NETC seats; Torrey and Frank Place represented the New York–New Jersey Trail Conference; A.E. Rupp, chief of the state department of lands and waters, and J. Bruce Byall represented the Pennsylvania region; Dr. H.S. Hedges of the University of Virginia and G. Freeman Pollock, president of the Northern Virginia Park Association, represented their state; and Rhoades and Paul M. Fink, a rustic trail-blazer from Jonesboro, Tennessee, covered the rest of the South.

The Appalachian Trail Conference’s first goal—completing the proposed footpath—was set; although it had yet to be perceived as an organization rather than a name for a meeting, its fate was forever tied to that of the Trail.

Momentum falters briefly

After the meeting, however, actual work in terms of completed Trail mileage fell off. Planning and publicity went on, carefully and in detail, but field progress—in recruitment of volunteers and construction of Trail—lost momentum due to lack of leadership. It was as if the effort to convene the conference and to legitimize the dreams and grand plans had exhausted a substantial part of the energy fueling the A.T. movement—or at least the energy of its designated field organizer, MacKaye. A different sort of energy was required to build treadway.

In 1926, a retired Connecticut lawyer and former police court judge named Arthur Perkins, then active with the New England Trail Conference, arrived to breathe new life into the project. By 1927, he was pressing to be appointed to fill a vacancy from New England on the A.T. executive committee. In addition to Connecticut trail work, he galvanized Mas-

sachusetts and Pennsylvania supporters and, perhaps most importantly, piqued the interest of a young lawyer who had been associated with his Hartford law firm, a 27-year-old Harvard Law School graduate, Myron H. Avery (see article on page 22).

At the annual January meeting of NETC in Boston in 1927, Perkins heard MacKaye deliver a speech entitled “Outdoor Culture: The Philosophy of Through Trails.” Borrowing themes developed by Executive Committee member Chauncey Hamlin, chairman of the National Conference on Outdoor Recreation, it comes across on paper today as a true tub-thumping political oration in behalf of the A.T. project. It certainly inspired Perkins, who asked to hear it again later that year.

American cities represent humans’ tendency to “over-civilize,” MacKaye asserted. They are as “spreading, unthinking, ruthless” as a glacier. Ancient Rome declined because its “Civilizees” had gone as far as they could; “the Barbarian at her back gate [gave Rome] its cleansing invasion from the hinterland.” What was needed in America was a similar invasion.

MacKaye said he hoped for development of a modern American Barbarian, “a rough and ready engineer” and explorer who would mount the crests of the Appalachians “and open war on the further encroachment of his mechanized Utopia.... [The] philosophy of through trails...is to organize a Barbarian invasion... Who are these modern Barbarians?” he asked. “Why, we are—the members of the New England Trail Conference....

“The Appalachian Range should be placed in public hands and become the site for a Barbarian Utopia. It matters little whether the various sections be State lands or Federal,” MacKaye declared, more than four decades before the Congress would agree.

Later in the meeting, MacKaye, Major Welch, and Judge Perkins got together to discuss ATC business. Welch’s work in park, camp, and highway development was increasing, not only in New York but as a consultant to public figures from presidents to industrialists and to domestic and foreign park experts. A

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man who reportedly refused all interviews (in sharp contrast to MacKaye), Welch wanted to relinquish an active ATC role. As a result, Perkins informally took over the leadership of the A.T. project.

In Washington, Myron Avery had taken a job with what eventually became the U.S. Maritime Commission. He loved the outdoors and was a natural leader. Within weeks of being briefed on the A.T. by Judge Perkins, he organized the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC) and was elected its first president. The lower mid-Atlantic states would become his first focus, although he and Raymond Torrey both were concerned about Pennsylvania.

A second ATC meeting, in May 1928 in Washington, sponsored by Avery's new club, formalized Perkins' role as acting chairman and authorized rewriting of the constitution and a more formal organization for the federation. By the next year, when it was ratified in Easton, Pennsylvania, it included the institution of a sixteen-member Board of Managers, with a smaller executive committee. Welch was elected honorary president; Perkins, chairman and trail supervisor; Ashton Allis, treasurer. Avery was named to both the Board and the executive committee.

The reworded purpose of the organization was to "promote, establish and maintain a continuous trail for walkers, with a system of shelters and other necessary equipment...as a means for stimulating public interest in the protection, conservation and best use of the natural resources within the mountains and wilderness areas of the East." Five hundred miles of Trail, not all marked, were at least open for travel, primarily the existing links of the New England

clubs and the New York–New Jersey Trail Conference.

With Perkins at his side much of the time, Avery, with his dual ATC/PATC positions and phenomenal dedication to the cause, set about indefatigably recruiting volunteers, organizing clubs, plotting routes—and flagging and cutting and constructing and blazing and measuring them and then writing construction manuals and guidebooks, publishing them with his

and attended club meetings in New England, too. Conference scrapbooks from this period repeatedly refer to MacKaye as "our Nestor" (referring to the wise old counselor of Homer's *Odyssey*). Biographer Larry Anderson mentions that his role into the mid-1930s was mostly inspirational, publishing and speaking about the idea of a wilderness trail.

Avery's concerns were more down to earth. According to a history of PATC by David Bates, *Breaking Trail in the Central Appalachians*, "Myron Avery kept a very firm hand on all activities within the PATC.... He followed all projects in detail, often calling or writing to committee chairmen to keep in touch or prod them along. He often planned the trips...in every detail."

PATC trips during its first four years resulted in the cutting of some 265 miles of Trail from central Pennsylvania to central Virginia and creation of a whole string of new A.T. clubs south of Harpers Ferry to Georgia, crucial to the completion of the Trail. MacKaye later praised "this vigorous club [as] a maker of clubs."

Avery handled public relations, wrote newspaper articles, and dealt with the federal agencies—all as a volunteer. There was no paid staff, and Avery's writings later were forceful in advocating a totally volunteer A.T. effort.

Much of this southern Appalachian territory that Perkins, Avery, Hedges, Fink, and others charted for the A.T. was truly isolated backcountry, physically and culturally. Memoirs of some ATC pioneers say they weren't even sure exactly where the Appalachians ended in the South. Some of the areas had not been officially mapped topographically by the federal government, and what



Judge Arthur Perkins is credited with reviving the A.T. movement.
(ATC Archives)

own money at first. Completing a continuous footpath—primarily for solitary hiking—became Avery's primary goal.

MacKaye, who spent the winter of 1928–29 working for Connecticut State Forester Austin F. Hawes, joined Perkins—and perhaps Avery—on two of the judge's many scouting trips for the Trail between Katahdin and the Potomac



Georgia A.T. Club volunteers on an early-1930s work trip rig a makeshift litter to carry out a club member who has sprained an ankle. (ATC Archives)

ceived by its proponents and already partly realized, is a *footpath for hikers* in the Appalachian Mountains, extending from Maine to Georgia, a distance of some 1,300 miles.” [Emphasis added.] Access to the mountains for “tramping, camping, and outdoor recreation” was the Trail’s purpose, he said.

For the time being, though, the Trail’s progress rather than its philosophy occupied his attention. By 1933, the U.S. For-

residents this wilderness had were highly suspicious of those who penetrated its hollows and ridges. Lacking road access, hiking trails that could be connected into the A.T. after the New England/New York models simply did not exist. But, by involving local citizens, the task was accomplished, and new supporters were enlisted in the project.

As Perkins prepared for the 1930 ATC general meeting in Skyland, Virginia, he suffered a stroke from which he never fully recovered. Major Welch chaired the meeting in his absence, and Perkins later asked Avery to carry on his work, as acting chairman. Perkins would die in 1932, and among his pallbearers would be both Avery and Benton MacKaye. In 1931, with 1,207 miles of an estimated 1,300-mile Appalachian Trail completed, Avery was elected ATC chairman, a position he would hold for the next twenty-one years, reelected six times.

Conflicting Visions Surface

MacKaye at this time considered the Trail firmly established and the following year wrote for *The Scientific Monthly* what he called a sequel to his seminal 1921 article. It was the answer, he said, to “the question so

often put to me by J.P. (Judge Perkins): ‘When we get the Trail, Ben, what are we going to do with it?’”

What to do with it would become an increasingly contentious issue, and one that would drive MacKaye and Avery apart. MacKaye’s vision was inspiring, but still essentially philosophical. In “The Appalachian Trail: A Guide to the Study of Nature,” he reiterated his position that trail-building was and should be only the “first long step in the longer pursuit of becoming harmonized with scenery—and the primeval influence—the opposite of machine influence.” He declared the project to be in its second stage: development of a primeval understanding.

Avery, on the other hand, was moving the Conference in a somewhat different direction, narrowing the focus of the organization’s stated intent, redefining purposes of the project, and reinterpreting its history as he went. Often described as a “practical idealist,” he promoted both Trail-building and hiking as essential keys to instilling individual resourcefulness and protection of the footpath itself against development. But, he had no plans to build a wilderness utopia.

In a 1930 article in *Mountain Magazine*, Avery—who was as prolific a writer as he was an industrious Trail scout—began flatly: “The Appalachian Trail, as con-

est Service and the southern clubs reported their third of the Trail completed. A.T. work also took a high priority within clubs between the Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania and New England, and progress there resumed. By that time, it was only the Trail in Maine, rather than the South, that still seemed an impossible dream. Conference leaders considered withdrawing the northern terminus to the original Mt. Washington point. Avery resisted any desertion of the planned route through his native Maine and initiated an intensive survey of remote areas planned for the Trail there and scouted earlier by Perkins. That reinforced the local efforts of such men as Walter D. Greene, a Broadway actor and Maine guide, and Helon N. Taylor, then a game warden and later supervisor of Baxter State Park (home of Katahdin).

Work in every state now moved rapidly. The southern terminus was established at Mt. Oglethorpe, in Georgia, and the northern terminus at Katahdin, in Maine. By 1934, clubs reported completion of 1,937 miles of Trail. The next year, the Maine Appalachian Trail Club was formed, with heavy PATC involvement and inspiration (including Avery as its overseer of trails from 1935 to 1949 and its president from 1949 until his death in 1952). Members trav-



The Era of Trail-Building . . .

eled from Washington, D.C., in the summer months for work trips.

Also in 1935, with ATC help and the encouragement of state and federal forest services, the Appalachian Trail—first in Maine, later in southern states—became an item on the agenda of the Depression-era Civilian Conservation Corps. Soon, involvement with those federal programs would make evident the latent Avery–MacKaye conflict.

The immediate point of contention was the government's plan to construct the Skyline Drive through Virginia—a Depression-era make-work project essentially right on top of the Appalachian Trail that PATC had scouted and built in the previous seven years. Avery and other PATC and ATC leaders—if not a majority, certainly a controlling faction—felt they needed government allies. Government agencies had been involved with the A.T. project virtually from its start, and it was becoming clear that, to build a connected Trail, government help was needed to further the values of the Trail as a whole for the long-term future. They also perceived that the backers of this scenic highway had more political clout than they. They chose not

to fight it, opting to let CCC crews relocate the A.T. in the new national park (largely at government expense, as it turned out, without a break in the route).

Others in both organizations wanted to fight the Skyline Drive proposal. They said it intruded on the wilderness and threatened the Trail as it was conceived. Most opponents seemed to be in MacKaye's circle of associates, including Raymond Torrey in New York (still writing for New York City newspapers), Harvey Broome in Tennessee, and Harold C. Anderson at PATC. Broome's club, the Smoky Mountains Hiking Club, and the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC), then the largest of the clubs in the Conference confederation, took positions against the roadway's construction.

In an article AMC asked him to write for its *Appalachia* magazine and then reprinted for wider distribution, "Flankine vs. Skyline," MacKaye strongly attacked

OFF THE TRAIL: THE THIRTIES

- The decade, worldwide, embraces the worst economic, social, and political debacles in Western memory. The media embraces small-town American life and good, clean living.
- Radio gives us Kate Smith, Edgar Bergen, Jack Benny, W.C. Fields, "Amos 'n' Andy," "War of the Worlds"—a virtual escape for the majority outside the 40 million poor and the 12 million unemployed.
- John Steinbeck is employed, taking a dog census on the Monterey Peninsula, and goes on to publish *The Grapes of Wrath*.
- The Empire State Building opens for business. King Kong is created to climb it.
- *LIFE* begins—as do Tina Turner, Rudolph Nureyev, Xerox-ing, Madeline Albright, John Updike, Mikhail Gorbachev, Neil Armstrong, Boris Yeltsin, Social Security, Brigitte Bardot, the universal five-day work week, and the minimum wage at two bits an hour.
- Life ends for Thomas Edison, Sigmund Freud, Will Rogers, John D. Rockefeller, Marconi, Pavlov, the Hindenburg, presumably Amelia Earhart, Arthur Conan Doyle, Prohibition, and Huey Long. George Gershwin writes "Porgy and Bess" at thirty-seven and dies at thirty-nine. Mr. Smith goes to Washington, Dorothy Gale walks to Oz, and Shirley Temple dances with Mr. Bojangles.
- Albert Einstein leaves Germany and warns of "The Bomb," and Edward Teller leaves to eventually press harder than anyone to build it. The average lawyer's salary is one quarter the price on John Dillinger's head.
- Edward VIII steps off the throne, Howard Hughes flies around the world, Bonnie and Clyde drive into a lead hailstorm, Jesse Owen runs Hitler's ideas into the ground at the Olympics, and Gandhi sits down in India.
- After Nazi troops pour into Poland in September 1939, sixty-one nations—eighty percent of the world—draft 110 million people to fight six years in world war, twenty years after "the war to end all wars."



MacKaye and Avery in a rare photo together. Both were pallbearers at Judge Perkins' funeral; by the time the Trail was completed, they were no longer on speaking terms. (ATC Archives)

path as a first-class engineered entity and an end in itself vs. a footpath as a means to a meta-physical end, with social and economic applications.

Put most simply, MacKaye pushed for protecting wilderness as an environment for higher human evolution. Avery pushed for completion of the chosen task of making the mountains accessible for outdoor recreation, period.

MacKaye did maintain inspiring correspondence with many compatible club and Conference leaders, always writing fondly

the idea of skyline drives, in Virginia and elsewhere.

A verbal battle, not officially reported by ATC but alluded to in many surviving letters and other documents, apparently consumed much of the June 1935 meeting of the Conference at Skyland in Shenandoah Park. MacKaye sounded his position that the purpose of the project transcended the miracle of constructing the Trail: "The mere footpath is no end in itself, but a means of sojourning in the wilderness, whose nurture is your particular care."

A dash of styles

Before and after, Avery answered each published attack and had his own articles published, extolling the new route. At the Skyland meeting, his position was overwhelmingly supported. Torrey published articles in his New York newspaper, complaining that opponents of the Skyline plan had been unfairly treated, and a schism in the project seemed possible.

The following winter, Avery and MacKaye exchanged heated letters and broke relations—for the remaining sixteen years that Avery lived, as far as researchers have been able to determine.

Avery criticized MacKaye for not sufficiently supporting ATC and PATC in their attempts to work with the government as a partner, rather than take it on as an adversary. Two months later, in February 1936, in his last year as a regional planner for the Tennessee Valley Authority in Knoxville, MacKaye reprimanded Avery for his "self-righteous, overbearing attitude and a bullying manner of expression."

Those who have studied the break between MacKaye and Avery confirm that it had little or nothing to do with cooperating with the government. MacKaye, after all, had advocated total public ownership of Trail lands at least as far back as 1927. Instead, they say, it was the result of radical differences in personal styles, strategy, and tactics and fundamentally different philosophical concepts of what the Trail should be and become: a foot-

of the Conference and the Trail maintainers. But, in 1935 and thereafter, MacKaye turned much of his intellectual energy toward founding The Wilderness Society with Broome, Anderson, and others from the A.T. project. (Ten years later, when he retired from the federal government, he became the Wilderness Society's president.) He would never again be actively involved in the A.T., except after Avery's death as an interested spectator.

The Trail is Completed

The work of the Trail project went on, with Avery's energies unabated. A continuous Appalachian Trail from Maine to Georgia should have been pronounced open, under Avery's schedule, in 1936. By that time, he had walked and measured every step of the flagged or constructed route and become the first "2,000-miler" on the footpath.

One mile remained between Davenport Gap and the Big Pigeon River in Tennessee, and two miles had to be built 186 miles south of Katahdin, on a

The Era of Trail-Building . . .

high ridge connecting Spaulding and Sugarloaf mountains in Maine. A late-summer snowstorm prevented completion of the Maine work in 1936. With the small southern gap in the 2,025-mile route taken care of early the next spring, a six-man CCC crew completed the final link in the Maine woods without fanfare, on August 14, 1937, and moved on to build shelters.

Two months earlier, Avery had qui-

etly saluted the imminent completion of the Trail-construction era, but he immediately challenged ATC members, meeting in Gatlinburg, Tennessee: “Rather than a sense of exultation, this situation brings a fuller realization of our responsibilities. To say that the Trail is completed would be a complete misnomer. Those of us, who have physically worked on the Trail, know that the Trail, as such, will never be completed.”

protective zones) with the National Park Service. The pacts officially recognized the privately inspired Trail and promised a share of public responsibility for its care. Until now, partnership between the Conference and public agencies had been informal. Over the coming decades, the cooperation would only become closer.

Not everything was proceeding smoothly, however. Ignoring the agency-level cooperative agreements, Congress in 1938 authorized the Blue Ridge Parkway as an extension of Skyline Drive. Avery later termed that highway decision “the major catastrophe in Appalachian Trail history.” Ultimately nearly 120 miles of the Trail were to be displaced; no other single act has displaced so much Trail mileage. The other disaster that year was natural: a hurricane in New England that left hundreds of Trail miles impassible. The Trail continued to be broken or damaged by periodic smaller gaps, some created

The Era of Trail Protection

At that meeting, the second ATC era—with a series of important consequences for the Conference’s role—was born, with the commitment to protect the Trail forever.

At the 1937 conference, Edward Ballard, a National Park Service field coordinator and AMC member, presented to the delegates an Avery-inspired resolution calling for pursuit of “an Appalachian Trailway”—a buffer strip of land through which the Trail and its surroundings would be protected, on private and public lands alike, for those who seek their recreation on foot. The Avery-Ballard vision adopted by ATC (and incorporated in all the legislation to come) made the footpath itself preeminent and sought cooperation with government agencies to secure a belt of land that would protect the path.

Fourteen months after the Ballard proposal, on October 15, 1938, the National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service executed an agreement to promote the Trailway concept on the 875 miles of federal lands along the A.T. route, creating, as an example to others, a protective zone extending one mile on

either side of the Trail. Neither new parallel roads for motor transportation—such as the divisive Skyline Drive in Virginia—nor other incompatible development not already authorized would be allowed within the new protective zone.



Halfway mark in Pennsylvania, circa 1937. (ATC Archives)

Timber-cutting would be prohibited within two hundred feet of the footpath. The Trail would be relocated where necessary to keep it at least one mile from any undesirable road. A system of campsites, lean-tos, and shelters also was authorized.

Soon, all the Trail states except Maine signed similar cooperative Trailway agreements (though with narrower

created by disputes between hikers and landowners and the many obstacles to keeping up with Trail work during World War II. It would be another thirteen years before all the links would once again be joined at the same time.

Internally after the 1937 meeting, the Conference expanded its capacity for coordinating the Trail/Trailway project and communicating with members and other supporters. It improved the guidebooks program and established

the *Appalachian Trailway News* as a three-times-a-year magazine in 1939. Dr. Jean Stephenson, the volunteer founding editor, paid the production costs of the first two issues herself and continued as editor until 1964. (It became a quarterly in 1972 and began five-times-a-year publication in May 1976.)

In 1940, with the United States not yet in the European war but its ships un-

der German attack, Avery moved to New York City with the relocation of the U.S. Shipping Board, where he still specialized in admiralty law. As U.S. involvement in the war increased, manpower for Trail work declined. After June 1941, there would be no more general conference meetings until 1948.

With the end of World War II, however, all Trail-related activities revived with a flourish. At about the same time,

End to End

The bit of Trail history that was made that year of 1948 was the appearance of the first reported “thru-hiker,” Earl V. Shaffer of Pennsylvania, who completed the entire 2,050 miles “open” that year in an uninterrupted four-month backpacking trip. While Shaffer was halfway to Maine, Avery was presiding over the Conference’s

leaders of various organizations. Avery’s text noted, however, that it “might well, instead of ‘Appalachian Trail,’ have been termed, ‘The Anonymous Trail,’ in recognition of the fact that many, many people...have labored on [it]. They have asked for no return nor recognition nor reward. They have contributed to the project simply by reasons of the pleasure found in trail-making and in the realization that they were, perhaps, creating something which would be a distinct contribution to the American recreational system and the training of American people.”

Late in 1951, Avery announced that he would not be a candidate for reelection as chairman the following June at the twelfth ATC conference, again at Skyland, Virginia, where he had first taken over from Arthur Perkins and later faced down the “revolt” over Skyline Drive. In his written final report, after noting that ATC was sound financially and all programs were on track, Avery stated, “The Appalachian Trail derives much of its strength and appeal from its uninterrupted and practically endless character. This is an attribute which must be preserved. I view the existence of this pathway and the opportunity to travel it, day after day without interruption, as a distinct aspect of our American life.”

He outlined a number of clear threats to maintaining a continuous route “immune from invasion and development”—setting the stage for more than thirty years of Conference, congressional, and federal administrative activity ahead (see box, page 15).

After Avery

lected to succeed Avery was Vice Chairman Murray H. Stevens of New York, former chairman of the New York–New Jersey Trail Conference and another of the pioneers (see article on page 30). He had been actively involved in both the organizational work and on-the-ground Trail-building and upkeep since 1928. By 1930, he had built the fifty-five-mile New York section east of the Hudson River that would link up with the Connecticut section built in



After World War II, the focus turned to linking the Trail up again and reopening neglected sections. (ATC Archives)

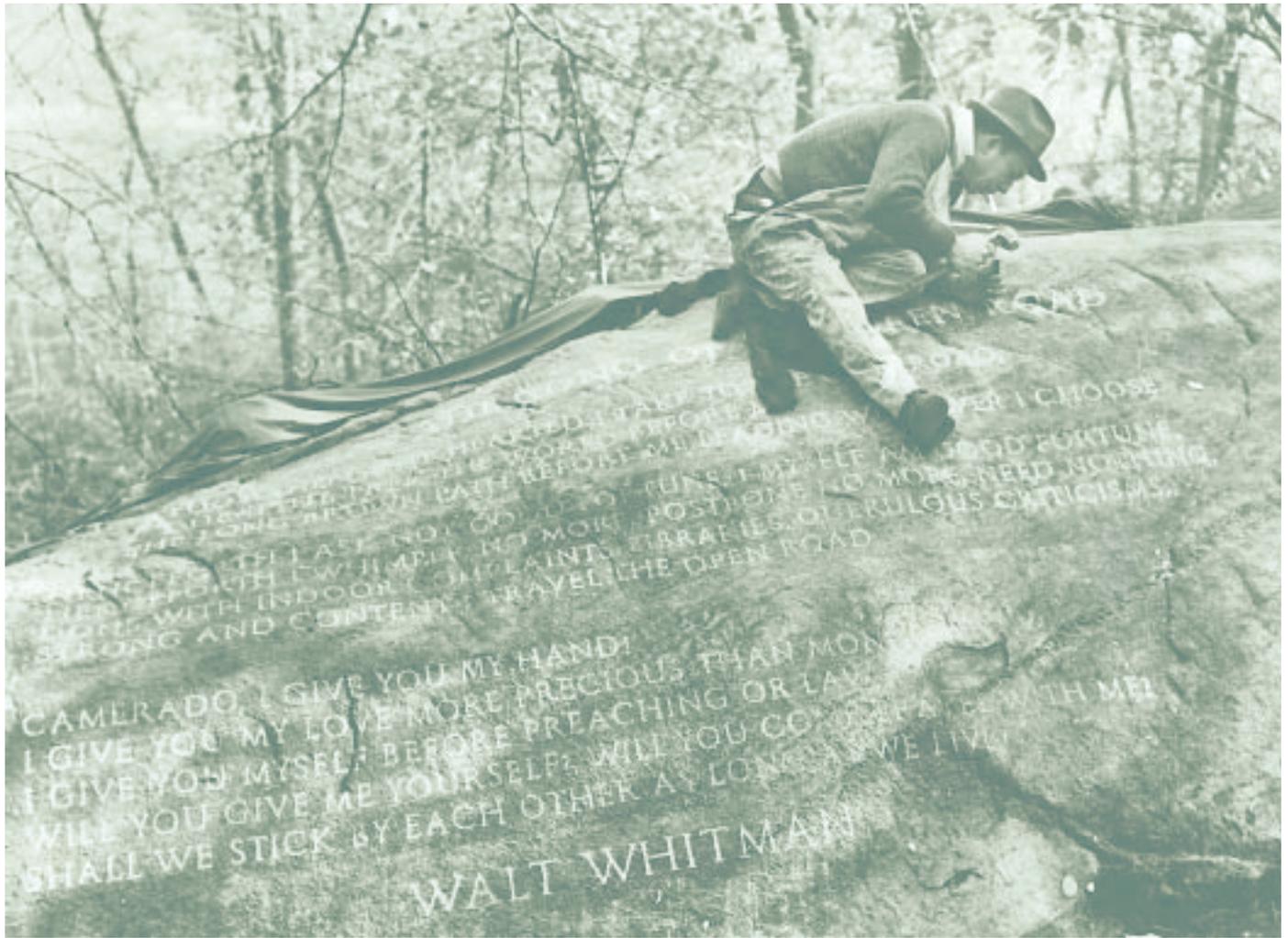
the Conference and its partners realized that the cooperative agreements were—and increasingly would be—insufficient to ensure protection of the Trail. In 1945, U.S. Representative Daniel K. Hoch of Pennsylvania, a member of the Board of Managers and president of the Blue Mountain Eagle Hiking Club, introduced farsighted legislation to create a national system of foot trails, specifically including the Appalachian Trail. The powerful chairman of the House Committee on Roads pigeonholed that bill. But, the hearings on it were circulated widely by the Conference leadership and served to develop the Trailway philosophy and crystallize the movement for its permanent protection. Three years later, Hoch, as a private citizen again, had an amended version of the legislation introduced, but it, too, was pigeonholed.

first postwar regrouping meeting, at Fontana Dam in North Carolina at an entrance to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Part of the meeting was devoted to a discussion on how unlikely a thru-hike would be. Shaffer later was named president of the York Hiking Club and, once he proved his trip to the satisfaction of Avery and Jean Stephenson, served as ATC corresponding secretary, providing advice to would-be hikers of all kinds.

In 1951, Avery could once again pronounce the Trail a continuous footpath. Avery planned an elaborate ceremony, ultimately canceled by heavy rain and fog, but his prepared remarks articulated another principal element in the nature of the project and the Conference: the pivotal role of the volunteer.

The Trail until then had been associated most often with the founders and

The Era of Trail-Building . . .



Craftsman carving the "Song of the Open Road" excerpt below the statue of Walt Whitman at Bear Mountain, New York. (Life Magazine)

OFF THE TRAIL: THE FORTIES

- By sea in the Pacific, by air in Europe, by land in North Africa, America is at war with totalitarianism, brought home in the words of Ernie Pyle, the lines of Bill Maudlin, and the voice of Edward R. Murrow. Pearl Harbor had silenced isolationism.
- Three million Jews are killed in concentration camps and two to three million elsewhere.
- "Teen-ager" is born (along with each of the Beatles, Steven Spielberg, Jimi Hendrix, Bill Clinton, Moammar Khaddafi, and the rest of the early Baby Boomers). Food and gasoline rationing and big-business growth. Drive-ins and Broadway musicals boom.
- FDR dies in Georgia. Mussolini is executed and hung head down in Milan. A Red Army flag is hoisted above the Reichstag. Hitler kills himself. Germany surrenders. The atomic bomb is tested in June and dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August. Japan surrenders. Forty-five German and Japanese military leaders are convicted of war crimes, one for every million people who died in the war. Six years of hot war begets forty-five years of Churchill-driven cold war.
- John F. Kennedy wins election to the U.S. House. And, Ghandi is assassinated by Hindu nationalists.
- Television begins to move...with game shows and Howdy Dowdy and Hopalong Cassidy. But probably not the new Kinsey Report.
- A mathematician named Norbert Wiener outlines the fundamentals of what becomes known as cybernetics.
- New York surpasses Paris as the center of the art world even as Christian Dior is reclaiming it for fashion. Jackie Robinson takes the field for Brooklyn. In not-yet Israel, they discover the Dead Sea Scrolls; in the Netherlands, Anne Frank's diary.

1930–33 by Ned Anderson.

Avery, who was named honorary chairman in tribute to his long service to the Trail project, died just eight weeks later, at age 52. Ill for a year from what *Appalachian Trailway News* termed “the ‘nerve fatigue’ from the intensive demands of his Navy work,” ATC’s “skipper” collapsed and died while touring Fort Anne National Historic Park in Nova Scotia with his son.

During the previous three decades, Avery had led a widely separated and loose collection of probably no more than two hundred working volunteers to make MacKaye’s wilderness-belt concept a practical hiking reality. Though the ranks of maintainers would slowly grow as his successors in the next four decades labored to fulfill Avery’s own concept of a secure, protective Trailway, they, too, had to struggle with relocations, maintenance, completion of the lean-to chain, and landowner/hiker relationships: the day-to-day work.

With the ATC’s chairman now living in New York, much of the day-to-day work of operating the Conference was carried on by a small handful of volunteers in Washington. Foremost among them was Dr. Stephenson, a long-term Avery associate and Navy Department employee who was a lawyer and genealogist as well as a professional editor. She ed-

ited and published the *Appalachian Trailway News*, guidebooks, and other publications, organized Conference meetings, maintained liaison to federal and state



ATN Editor Jean Stephenson (ATC Archives)

officials, provided background to the officers on an array of issues, and also cleared the Trail in Maine. In her late seventies, after Florence Nichol had become ATN editor, she was still editing A.T. guidebooks—even from hospital beds.

Among those organizing Washington volunteers nightly at Potomac A.T. Club headquarters to answer mail and A.T. guide orders was Fred Blackburn, Confer-

ence secretary, whose wife, Ruth, became PATC president in the early 1960s and ATC chair in the early 1980s. Another stalwart was Sadye Giller, the treasurer, who spent nearly every Saturday afternoon for twenty-two years at ATC headquarters, keeping the financial records.

Sprawl Prompts Relocations

The Fifties and Sixties saw many significant, voluntary relocations of the Trail—some of them 75 to 150 miles long and requiring two or more years of steady work—to refine and enhance the route and add peaks, views, southern balds, and safer stream crossings. In 1961, the Conference elected another Maine native—Stanley A. Murray, then living in Kingsport, Tennessee—chairman, a position he would hold for fourteen years, a tenure second only to Avery’s. (See page 31. A constitutional change in 1972 limited the tenure of each office to six consecutive years.) It was during this period that the goal of securing the dream of a permanently protected Trailway on public lands was fully adopted—the era that began in the mid-1930s, as the footpath was finally becoming a continuous reality, was about to close its penultimate chapter.

Real threats to the Trail compelled this step. Commercial development had

Myron Avery’s Final Report to the Appalachian Trail Conference (excerpt)

The problem lies in the connecting units of privately owned land [between publicly owned areas], much of which will soon become subject to intense development. Protest against federal or state domination is, of course, a popular theme these days. However, the unexpected penetration and development of areas in private ownership...will serve to fortify our conclusion that some form of public protection must be extended to the Trail system if it is to survive as a through, continuous recreational unit. The problem is very real. Its solution and an ability to make effective that desired solution present to our successors an issue and labor in comparison with which the efforts of the past two decades are indeed minute.

Development and increase of population may...possibly produce the unavoidable result that, in lieu of a continuous uninterrupted Trail, we shall have to content ourselves with disconnected segments of an extensive length. We enter now in Appalachian Trail history the stage where emphasis and

attention must be focused on the benefits resulting from this opportunity to travel the forests of the eastern United States, as our forefathers knew them. While this theme is far from pleasant, I would be remiss, indeed, if I failed to note the inevitable extraordinarily rapid change to be anticipated in the character of the private lands through which the Trail route passes....

A trail and its markings do not constitute any intrusion upon naturalness of the forest wilderness. Trails should be marked and maintained in a manner to eliminate the necessity of labor and uncertainty in finding one’s route. They should be an open course, a joy for travel. In that manner, without concern for route finding, the traveler will derive full benefit from his surroundings. This is what we have sought to accomplish in our constant and unending emphasis on the indicated standards of Appalachian Trail marking and maintenance.

The Era of Trail-Building . . .



Chestnut blight—scenes like this (probably in the Shenandoah National Park) were typical in the 1920s and 1930s. (ATC Archives)

already led to the abandonment in 1958 of Mt. Oglethorpe and the Amicalola Range, the tail of the Blue Ridge, in favor of Springer Mountain, which was on protected national forest land. Congress was again considering major new parkways in Georgia and New Jersey that threatened to push the Trail aside. Ski resorts, mountaintop second-home developments, military-communications towers, mining and timber-cutting, new highways for an increasingly (auto) mobile America, and the inevitable advance of the East Coast megalopolis had an enormous cumulative effect on the Trail environment—the threat MacKaye envisioned four decades before was becoming more real.

To meet the constant onslaught of development, the Conference turned once again to the legislative process. At an ultimately historic meeting in the lamplight at Chairback Mountain Camps in Maine in August 1963, Chairman Murray, Jean Stephenson, Sadye Giller, and Sidney Tappen from Massachu-

setts agreed it was time to resurrect the work begun in the 1940s by Representative Hoch.

As it turned out, their timing was good. Congress was already considering the formation of the Land and Water Conservation Fund through which funds for the Trail project would be funneled fifteen years later. The climate for the proposal seemed better than in the war and early postwar years.

Murray called a meeting of ATC officers and other interested parties that fall in Washington. At a later social gathering, a supporter from Wisconsin happened to mention the problems to the senator from his home state, Gaylord Nelson, whose committee assignments and personal inclinations made him an ideal standard-bearer. Within a few weeks, Senator Nelson indicated his willingness to help.

In May 1964, Nelson introduced a bill that declared the Trail and sufficient lands on either side to be “in the public interest” and a resource requiring preservation. His bill did not advance in that election

year, but, reintroduced in 1965, it received vigorous support in Senate hearings. At the same time, President Lyndon B. Johnson directed Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall to develop recommendations for a national system of trails that would “copy the great Appalachian Trail in all parts of America.” Over the next two years, the Conference—with a legislative committee chaired by Dr. Walter S. Boardman—worked with the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation to draft new, more comprehensive legislation, later proposed by the administration.

In the middle of the socially and politically tumultuous year of 1968, the Senate passed the proposed National Trails System Act, the House approved a variation, and House-Senate conferees resolved the differences. On October 2, 1968, President Johnson signed Public Law 90-543 (see page 53). At the time, about 1,032 miles—roughly half the Trail—was located on either private lands or on roads, some of which were paved and heavily used.

Continued on page 52

Trail Profiles

ATC's Volunteer Leadership Over Eight Decades



Benton MacKaye

And the Path to the First A.T. Conference

By Larry Anderson

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Appalachian Trail was first proposed in 1921, in an article by Benton MacKaye in the Journal of the American Institute of Architects. In this excerpt adapted from his forthcoming biography of MacKaye, to be published in 2002 by Johns Hopkins University Press, author Larry Anderson traces the growth of MacKaye's idea from a philosophical article to the first Appalachian Trail Conference in 1925.

An Idea Catches On

Just more than a year after MacKaye's Trail project had first been publicly broached, the scheme had taken hold. Already, MacKaye reported in the December 1922 issue of *Appalachia*, individuals, outdoor clubs, and public officials were at work from the White Mountains of New

Hampshire to the Great Smokies along the Tennessee-North Carolina border, "exploring and scouting the chief links" in each of eight Trail "divisions." A third of the 1,700-mile Trail he originally proposed, according to his estimates, was already in existence, principally in such states as New Hampshire, Vermont, New York, and New Jersey, as well as in the national

forests of the South. "In almost every locality along the Appalachian ranges, a greater or less amount of trail-making is going on anyhow from year to year," he observed. "The bright idea, then, is to combine these local projects—to do one big job instead of forty small ones."

When the New England Trail Conference met in January 1923, *New York Post* columnist Raymond Torrey reported, the Trail "was the principal subject considered." In his enthusiastically received address, MacKaye now promoted dimensions of the project he had downplayed in his original proposal. He envisioned the Appalachian Trail as the backbone of a publicly owned "super-national forest" stretching from Maine to Georgia. The Trail itself, MacKaye suggested, could be built by local organizations in a series of links, "each link to be sufficient of itself and to serve for local use." He also floated his idea for a "central organization" to oversee the Trail's creation and maintenance. He likened such a federation of local groups to "the original Thirteen States of the Union." But, such an organization, MacKaye cautioned, "is something which should grow and ripen rather than be suddenly created."

MacKaye's 1921 article proposing the Trail, "An Appalachian Trail: A Project in Regional Planning," may have omitted any direct references to its essentially socialist underpinnings, but the ideological implications of the proposal were still distinct. Among the readers who



*MacKaye in 1930s. (PATC Archives)
Top of page: H.F. Rensthallar,
Raymond Torrey, W.H. Shoenmair,
and Judge Arthur Perkins in 1928.
(ATC Archives)*

responded enthusiastically to the sweep of MacKaye's vision had been his erstwhile boss, Gifford Pinchot. "I have just been over your admirable statement about an Appalachian Trail for recreation, for health and recuperation, and for employment on the land," wrote the former Forest Service chief, who went on to compliment MacKaye on the clarity of his vision. Pinchot's endorsement was but one indication of the intellectual recognition and personal support MacKaye began to receive.

MacKaye's article, and his own efforts over the next several years to launch and organize the Trail project, were catalysts for a new burst of activity based on existing, but unfocused, energy and enthusiasm. He managed, through his own network of personal acquaintances, to locate and bring together the strategic individuals and organizations to launch the project. "It will be comparatively simple to push on the trail proper portion of our program," he wrote. "The main problem will be how to handle the community feature." As the years went on, MacKaye's assessment of the project's prospects proved to be altogether accurate. Some of the recreationists, as he had predicted, had a more modest agenda and a less ideological rationale for their efforts than did he and his planning associates. For many, a trail was simply a trail.

The appeal of the Appalachian Trail project paralleled developments in the coalescing American wilderness-preservation movement. By the early 1920s, the fate and the uses of America's remaining undeveloped lands were subjects of intense debate among a small but expanding circle of foresters, conservationists, and land-use activists. A month after the publication of MacKaye's Appalachian Trail proposal, the *Journal of Forestry* carried an article titled

"The Wilderness and Its Place in Forest Recreational Policy," written by the Forest Service's Aldo Leopold. "By 'wilderness,' Leopold wrote, "I mean a continuous stretch of country preserved in its natural state, open to lawful hunting and fishing, big enough to absorb a two weeks' pack trip, and kept devoid of roads, artificial trails, cottages, or other works of man." Leopold's eloquent voice gradually redefined the terms in which the whole question of wilderness protection in the United States was perceived and discussed.

MacKaye envisioned a reconstituted wilderness along the Appalachian Mountain range, where the original wilderness no longer existed—at least not on the scale or of the character that Leopold had experienced in the Southwest. The Appalachian Trail would represent a conceptual wilderness, traversing numerous political jurisdictions, environmental habitats, and human cultures across thousands of mountainous miles.

Over the years, the wilderness philosophies and concep-

tions of such figures as MacKaye, Leopold, and Arthur Carhart expanded and converged. In practical terms on the American landscape, the two concepts introduced respectively by Leopold and MacKaye (who would later be among the eight cofounders of the Wilderness Society in 1935)—the extensive wilderness area and the regional linear wilderness represented by the Appalachian Trail—would gradually, but never entirely, be connected.

The Hiking Enthusiasts Respond

New York architect Clarence Stein had been introduced to MacKaye in July 1921 by their mutual acquaintance, Charles Harris Whitaker, editor of the AIA journal. As

chairman of the AIA's committee on community planning, Stein agreed to support MacKaye's Trail idea. He urged his new friend to come to New York in early 1922 to promote both the Trail project and some book proposals. From March through June, MacKaye made a circuit from his Shirley, Massachusetts, home to Boston, Hartford, Washington, D.C., and back again. The trip proved to be probably the most effective and important missionary work he ever accomplished for the Appalachian Trail. Reprints of his article in hand, he traveled from city to city, an apostle of outdoor life. By the sheer force of his idea and his personality, MacKaye began stitching together the network of enthusiasts and public officials who would eventually comprise a permanent community of Trail-builders.

Probably the most significant of his New York meetings was a March 21 lunch at the City Club with Stein and Raymond H. Torrey. For several years, Torrey had

edited a feature page for the *New York Evening Post*, in which he detailed the activities of the many outdoor clubs in the New York metropolitan region. No mere reporter of those activities, however, Torrey was the "supreme ombudsman in the boiling consortium of New York hiking clubs," laying out trails, writing and editing guidebooks, organizing clubs, and lobbying for greater political support of public parks and forests.

A few weeks later, on April 6, Torrey set up a meeting with several other movers and shakers in New York-area hiking circles, including Major William A. Welch, general manager of the popular Palisades Interstate Park along the Hudson River, and J. Ashton Allis, the banker and outdoorsman who had already proposed a trail from the Delaware Water Gap on into New England. It was at this meeting, as MacKaye later recollected, that Torrey recommended the formation of "something that you might call—well, you might call it, say, the 'New York–New Jersey Trail Confer-



Benton MacKaye (ATC Archives)



Bear Mountain Bridge, a key link in the early A.T., begun in the area just above the lake. (ATC Archives)

ence,” modeled on the New England club federation.

Torrey’s contributions to the Trail project were just beginning, though. His lengthy column in the *Post* the next day, titled “A Great Trail from Maine to Georgia,” provided an enthusiastic description of MacKaye’s proposal. Including a version of MacKaye’s Trail map, Torrey’s article represented the first extensive description of the Appalachian Trail project to a broad public audience. “Some mighty big things are coming out of this trail movement in the next few years if its development grows at the pace it now shows,” Torrey predicted.

Regional Planning—a New Concept

MacKaye soon found himself at the center of a movement to develop a new approach to American community-building. At Clarence Stein’s urging, he returned to New York City immediately after the January 1923 New England Trail Conference and holed up in the Columbia University library to work on a book about regional planning. At the same time, his network of stimulating friends and associates quickly expanded, and his ideas began to earn an increased measure of public attention. “These weeks in N.Y. have been tremendous ones for me—imbibing ideas from my wondrous group of friends here,” he breathlessly reported to his brother, Percy MacKaye, at the beginning of March, as an important new professional, intellectual, and personal chapter opened in his life.

“I well remember the shock of astonishment and pleasure that came over me when I first read [MacKaye’s] proposal,” one new acquaintance, author Lewis Mumford, recalled. “[B]ut even the most sanguine backer of MacKaye’s

idea could hardly have guessed that this was such an *idée force*. . . that MacKaye would live to see the Trail itself and some of the park area, as in the Great Smokies, finished before another twenty years had passed.”

Mumford, the cosmopolitan New York writer, and MacKaye, the exuberant Yankee forester, soon became productive professional collaborators. They were among the founders of the Regional Planning Association of America (RPAA) that April. Mumford discovered in MacKaye an inimitably American practitioner of the communal and regionalist ideals he was espousing in his own writing. MacKaye, though sixteen years older than his new friend, found in Mumford a sounding board, advocate, editor, and intellectual disciplinarian for his own sometimes unruly ideas and literary efforts. (“[W]hy should I ever write myself,” he once confessed to Mumford, “when you can portray my ideas so much better?”) Over the next decade, in their individual and joint writings, MacKaye and Mumford produced the most comprehensive expressions of the planning association’s ideas and ideals. Just as important, the two men in these years cemented a strong, if sometimes guarded, friendship that flourished for more than half a century.

MacKaye, Mumford, Stein, and Stuart Chase constituted the association’s initial “program committee.” Their detailed memorandum bore the heavy stamp of MacKaye’s efforts and influence. Indeed, this first formal RPAA program consisted principally of the adoption of his entire Appalachian project. With an eye toward the possible formation later that year of an “All Appalachian Trail Conference” to assume the Trail’s administration, the memo’s authors proposed that the planning association adopt “the regional planning features of the project” from the AIA committee on community planning. Specifi-



cally, they suggested the “reconnoitering and surveying of a series of unit valley-sections (or small regions) within the Appalachian Domain,” preferably in the region of the Appalachians from New Jersey through New England, in association with state and federal government agencies. They also proposed the “scouting and organizing,” with hiking clubs and other amateur groups, of several key links of the Appalachian Trail, to make these “conveniently and inexpensively accessible for walkers and campers living in the neighboring cities.”

On Stein’s assurance that funds would be available to carry out some of the proposed RPAA initiatives, MacKaye set to work from his base at the Hudson Guild Farm for much of that summer. Though his ambitious plans for a series of valley-section surveys were not fulfilled, he surveyed, mapped, and tramped northwestern New Jersey, sometimes alone, sometimes with groups of young people from the Hudson Guild Farm. Working with Stein, Major Welch, and Raymond Torrey in 1923, MacKaye also prepared for an autumn conference on the Trail project. Co-sponsored by the Palisades Interstate Park and the New York–New Jersey Trail Conference, the meeting convened October 26 through 28 at the imposing Bear Mountain Inn. The conference brought some of MacKaye’s planning friends like Stein and Mumford together with Welch, Allen Chamberlain, Albert Turner, Harlan Kelsey, the state foresters of New York and New Jersey, and others from the region’s conservation and hiking community.

The approximately thirty “not-too-serious people” present shared information and thoughts about the progress of the project; some hiked stretches of the Trail in and around the park. The group also adopted Welch’s proposed design for a uniform Trail marker: a copper monogram incorporating the cross-bars of the letters A and T, a variation of which was later approved as the official Trail emblem. The Bear Mountain meeting brought yet more people and interests under the Trail project’s umbrella.

A year later, Mac-Kaye returned to Har-riman–Bear Mountain State Park, where Major Welch provided him a cabin. For a month, he hiked and scouted trails in and around the parks. (The newly opened Bear Mountain bridge solved the problem of a Hudson River Trail crossing, thereby forging the critical Trail link between the New England and mid-Atlantic

states.) He also plotted with Welch and Torrey the next steps in the Trail campaign. Though the RPAA had taken over nominal sponsorship of the Trail project, only MacKaye felt truly comfortable articulating the Trail’s significance as an instrument of regional planning. The project’s principals well understood that the real expertise, manpower, and enthusiasm to complete the task would necessarily come from the hiking community, and they all agreed that the time had come to pursue more seriously the idea of a centralized Appalachian Trail organization, comprising a federation of trail clubs operating the full length of the proposed Trail route.

The first Appalachian Trail conference, a Washington meeting of the general council of the National Conference on Outdoor Recreation in December 1924, attracted MacKaye and many of the key figures in the Trail effort (as well as prominent officials, such as Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover, who

told the conferees that their objective was “to make life less drab”). Plans were soon being made for a meeting early in 1925 to create a new group to oversee the Trail’s construction and administration. Welch agreed to preside over an organizational conference. RPAA approached American Civic Association Executive Secretary Harlean James to organize an “Appalachian Trail Conference” in Washington in March. As editor of the *American Planning and Civic Annual*, James was a respected



MacKaye on the Appalachian Trail. (ATC Archives)

figure in the fields of planning and public recreation (see page 44, “ATC at 25”). Motivated as well by a personal interest in the Trail project (she had attended the October 1923 Bear Mountain Inn conference), she proved to be the ideal person to organize this critical first Appalachian Trail conference, which was, in fact, officially sponsored by the recently formed Federated Societies of Planning and Parks.

When the Appalachian Trail conference convened at Washington’s Raleigh Hotel on March 2, 1925, the impressive and influential array of speakers on the program reflected how powerfully Mac-Kaye’s idea had taken hold on official and public consciousness since he had offered his proposal not four years earlier. On the first day of the conference, speaking after Welch and Frederic A. Delano, president of the Federated Societies, MacKaye described the philosophy behind the Trail project. “Its ultimate purpose is to conserve, use and enjoy the mountain hinterland which penetrates the populous portion of America

from north to south,” he declared, according to his own detailed “brief” of the conference. “The Trail (or system of trails) is a means for making this land accessible. The Appalachian Trail is to this Appalachian region what the Pacific Railway was to the Far West—a means of ‘opening up’ the country. But a very different kind of ‘opening up.’ Instead of a railway, we want a ‘trailway.’”

He went on to explain his vision of the trailway as a “functioning service,” comprising a series of camps and stores for shelter and food; a transportation system by train and automobile from neighboring cities; and the footpath itself. But, he warned that the “path of the trailway should be as ‘pathless’ as possible; it should be a minimum path consistent with practicable accessibility.” Then, he outlined his plan for the project’s next stage. As depicted on a map that he had prepared for the conference, the projected Trail route would be divided into five regions: New England, New York and New Jersey, Pennsylvania, the central Appalachian states from Maryland through Virginia, and the southern Appalachian states from North Carolina to Georgia.

State foresters, park officials, Forest Service district foresters, trail club officers, and local hiking enthusiasts reported on the Trail’s progress and prospects in their regions. F.E. Matthes of the U.S. Geological Survey discussed the possibility of developing a “nature guide service” in conjunction with the Trail, a notion that remained a favorite of

MacKaye’s. Arthur Comey of the New England Trail Conference, himself a respected landscape architect and planner, gave a talk on “Going Light,” a matter of intense interest to long-distance hikers in an era before the development of high-technology, low-weight camping gear. Clarence Stein, addressing the group in a more philosophical vein, suggested that the recreational development of the Appalachian crestline was necessary to offset the pernicious influence of “Atlantis,” the “possible giant city” he depicted evolving along the eastern seaboard.

On the afternoon of the conference’s second day, after National Park Service Director Stephen T. Mather spoke, those in attendance voted to establish the Appalachian Trail Conference as “a permanent body.” A provisional constitution was approved that created a fifteen-person executive committee. Finally, the executive committee itself was elected, with Major Welch as chairman, Verne Rhoades of the Forest Service as vice chairman, and Harlean James as secretary. The executive committee was stitched together primarily from the connections MacKaye had made personally since he started promoting the

project in 1921. Stein, Torrey, Rhoades, Welch, H. A. Hedges, Paul Fink, Arthur Comey, and Frank Place were among those who had been brought into the project in its earliest stages. And, Forest Service Chief William B. Greeley and the National Conference on Outdoor Recreation’s then-chairman, Chauncey J. Hamlin, added influence and prestige to the organization’s leadership.

MacKaye was named “field organizer.” During discussions that were not made part of the meeting record, plans were laid to raise \$5,000 to support his projected fieldwork. Whether by oversight or intention, he was not included on the group’s executive committee. His omission from the ATC’s governing board provided a harbinger of his ambiguous future role and reputation in the Conference. Beyond his brief tenure as field organizer, MacKaye would never serve as an officer of the organization that he, probably more than any other individual, had been instrumental in creating.



MacKaye and Clarence Stein in the 1970s. (ATC Archives)

Nevertheless, he declared the 1925 meeting a success. “The Conference was called for the purpose of organizing a body of workers (representative of outdoor living, and of the regions adjacent to the Appalachian Range) to complete the building of the Appalachian Trail,” MacKaye recorded. “This purpose was accomplished.”

The creation of the Appalachian Trail Conference was an essential step toward the eventual completion of the Appalachian Trail. Already, though, the

conceptual scope of MacKaye’s original project had narrowed considerably from what he had proposed in his original 1921 article. The leadership of the new ATC indicated the nature of that constricted vision. The project was in the hands of well-educated, middle-class professionals—lawyers, engineers, educators, scientists—and government officials. The labor unions and settlement houses MacKaye had included in his early depiction of the project were not involved. Now there was no talk of “community camps” or “food and farm camps.” The Trail was now a recreational project, pure and simple. But, the principle of local groups, federated under the gentle guidance of a modest central organization, working and playing on the terrain they knew and loved, would provide the key to the project’s eventual completion and success.

In later years, some leaders of the Appalachian Trail effort charged that MacKaye had not paid sufficient attention to the detailed, practical tasks of locating, building, and maintaining the physical Trail. Such criticisms tended to arise from those who had not been involved in the Trail project during its

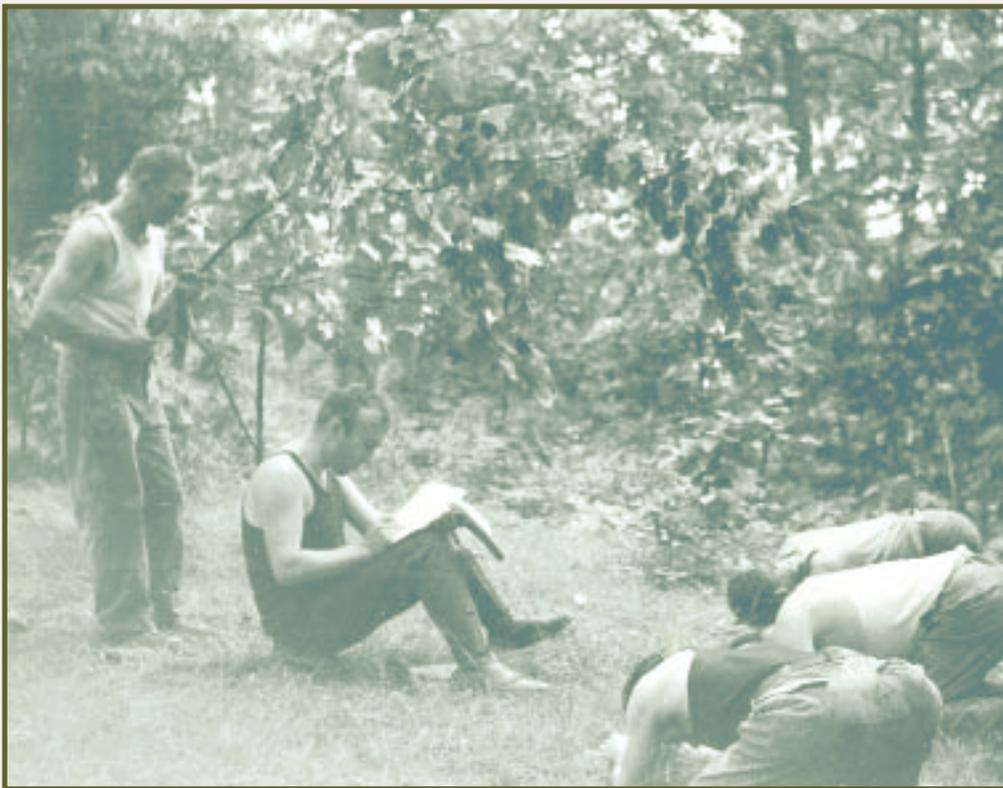


very earliest few years—the very years, in fact, when MacKaye made his greatest contributions to the Trail project and at the greatest personal sacrifice. He succeeded in establishing the concept of the Appalachian Trail. As importantly, but harder to measure than the miles of Trail blazed, he located and linked together other dedicated and influential Trail en-

thusiasts throughout the region spanned by the project. His own prospects were still unsettled, and his efforts had been carried on with virtually no financial reward. Through his writings, correspondence, speeches, and travels, however, MacKaye inspired the creation of the “camp community” his 1921 article had called into action.

The Short, Brilliant Life of Myron Avery

By Robert A. Rubin



The court of “Emperor Myronides I”—A.T. trail-blazers in the Smokies clown with Avery (seated) during a scouting trip in the mid-1930s. Not everybody laughed. (ATC Archives)

Myron Haliburton Avery should have died on a mountain, pushing his measuring wheel along the ridgeline,

recording the details of some newly opened segment of the Appalachian Trail. For many years, he had devoted himself to the strenuous life, to physical fitness and the outdoors, and to the mountains of the Appalachians. His imagination dwelt on the footpath that ran along its spine from Georgia to Maine.

He did not die in the mountains, or even at the desk in the Navy’s admiralty-law office from which he had fired off so many gruff, Type-A, take-no-prisoners letters about the Trail and about the job he threw so much of his energy into. No, Avery collapsed on July 26, 1952, while on a holiday in Nova Scotia with his son, Hal. He was touring Canada’s Maritime Provinces, tracing the Avery family history, and trying to ease up from an intensely stressful way of life that had finally taken its toll in a series of heart attacks. His son was with him when it happened, on a grassy hummock atop the old fortifications of Fort Anne National Historic Park in Nova Scotia. A doctor who rushed to the scene from across the street said the final heart attack was so massive Avery was probably dead before he even hit the ground. Eight weeks earlier, he had resigned as chairman of the Appalachian Trail Conference. He was four months

short of his fifty-third birthday.

After word of Avery’s death filled obituary columns of major East Coast papers and *Appalachian Trailway News*, letters poured in to the Conference and to the Avery family, praising him and his accomplishments as a trail-builder and admiralty lawyer. There was no letter from Benton MacKaye in the volume of tributes assembled by ATC. Whatever MacKaye’s feelings about Avery, he kept them to himself or his own circle.

Avery and MacKaye

Benton MacKaye rightly gets credit for the concept of the Appalachian Trail and for the networking and organizational groundwork that led to the first Appalachian Trail conference in 1925. But, if MacKaye had the visionary idea, Avery had the focused understanding that turned the utopian dream into the two-thousand-mile artifact of rock, soil, wood, and white-paint blazes we follow today. Without MacKaye, the Trail might never have been envisioned and proposed. Without Avery, it might never have been built.

Avery and MacKaye came from different generations and different worlds. They were never close, did not socialize, and, in the end, wanted little to do with each other. MacKaye was the patrician New Englander, raised in the late Victorian era, the son of artists and intellectuals; Avery was the plain-speaking Maine lawyer, born near the turn of the century, son of a sardine-factory manager. MacKaye was the pipe-smoking prophet, the voice crying out for the wilderness whose audacious vision inspired others to act; Avery, the apostle of action, the one who took the word out into the world, who with his own hands built trails, institutions, and relationships that would carry the vision forward, who recruited small bands of believers up and down the East Coast and turned the Trail from treatise into treadway.

Each of the Trail's two patriarchs had his champions and his detractors. Even today, if you listen closely when longtime ATC members start talking Trail history, you may hear slighting references to "Saint Benton," who never deigned to get his hands dirty, or "Emperor Myronides I," the dictator whose single-minded push to connect the dots corrupted the dream. Neither caricature is accurate, of course. Both men were necessary. What is more, the tension between their approaches to the idea of a footpath in the wilderness remains at the heart of the Conference today. It keeps it dynamic and relevant, slow to rest on its laurels and slow to abandon the idealism that gave it birth, yet realistic about the politics and compromise required to keep such a large-scale undertaking vital.

To understand that tension and that dynamic requires understanding Myron Avery.

The Lawyer and the Judge

I am, really, not hard to get along with," Avery wrote to a sharp old New England lawyer named Arthur Perkins in 1929. That might have been true, as long he was in agreement with you. At the time, he was in agreement with Perkins, caught up in his first great enthusiasm for Trail-blazing, a two-year period that saw the founding of the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, the establishment of standards for building and marking the A.T., a complete reorganization of the Conference, and a marked footpath between Shenandoah National Park and southern Pennsylvania.

In his first flush of excitement about the Trail, that is the Avery that comes across in his correspondence—a conciliator, a builder, a motivator. When Judge Perkins' high-handed Yankee manner put an early southern trail-builder's nose out of joint, it was Avery who sought to make peace, because the southerner was doing valuable work. Only later, as he became more certain of what the Appalachian Trail should be, and what he had to do to make it so, did the hard edge of his impatience begin to assert itself when he found his vision challenged by others.

Avery was born November 3, 1899, in the coastal town of Lubec, to an old Maine family that had lived there since the American Revolution. He was in a hurry even then, graduating from high school and Bowdoin College, where he was a member of Phi Beta Kappa, by 1920. He loved the Maine woods and the vigorous life outdoors, running cross-country for Bowdoin, but it was not until three years later, after he was graduated

from Harvard Law School and moved away from Maine to take a job, that he discovered how much he missed the woods.

When exactly Avery came to love the woods is unclear. His only surviving son, Haliburton "Hal" Avery, said that the family had lived in Lubec for generations and was closely tied to the sardine-processing industry that dominated the town. Myron Avery's father ran the North Lubec Canning Company, owned by a Lubec family whose sons were too young to oversee its operations.

"The usual thing back then was that, in the summer, everyone in town worked in the fish-processing business," Hal Avery recalled. "They used to



Avery and PATC members scouting a new route for the Trail. (PATC Archives)

have ten sardine factories in Lubec—that was the whole economy of the area.”

Avery was fascinated by ships and the sea and would later make his career in maritime law, but, for some reason, his son said, when it was time for Myron Avery to get a summer job, he went to the woods, not to the waterfront, getting involved in forestry and working with the agencies that managed the timber industry farther inland. It was sometime during this period that Avery first encountered Katahdin, a mountain he would study for the rest of his life and about which he would write volumes. This interest apparently continued during the summers when Avery attended Bowdoin, even though the liberal-arts college did not offer vocational courses, such as forestry. He was a member of the outing club there and wrote of at least one trip to the Dead River section of Maine in 1918. There was no such thing as “pre-law” back then, Hal Avery recalled, but that was clearly his father’s goal all through college. He was a first-rate student, getting honors in Latin, and moved on im-

mediately to Harvard Law School. This is backed up by one of Avery’s letters, which mentions his involvement in settling a case involving a ship that was sunk in 1922; he apparently took over the case in the latter stages of the settlement process but does not indicate when, or if, he was working in Washington when he did so. By 1925, however, he was indisputably there at least part of the time, for it is where he met Jean-nette Leckie. She was a rancher’s daughter from Wyoming who had moved to the nation’s capital to live with relatives after her parents died. They were married that year.

A Life at High Intensity

The Appalachian Trail ultimately became Avery’s great achievement, a supreme avocation into which he poured boundless energy and innumerable volunteer hours and for which he will always be remembered. What is perhaps more astounding is that he poured even more time and energy into his work as a lawyer for the government. He was continually driven to work, to act, to do, and even his times of recreation were filled with constant activity. Look at nearly any picture of Avery in the ATC archives, even those of him on hiking expeditions, and he is hard at work. While everyone else stands at the overlook and enjoys the view, he is off to one side, jotting notes about distances and terrain.

“When I think of my father,” Hal Avery said, “I don’t think of any one moment or incident in our lives. I think of his characteristics—I think of a very ethical, very moral man, quite demanding of all of us, almost on a perfectionist level. And, he was equally demanding of himself. In the family, we treated him with a great deal of respect: It was, ‘Yes, sir,’ and, ‘No, sir.’ Maybe it was the military background, but he had a real presence. It wasn’t until later that I learned that other people never did that in

their families, but we did.”

“He would work extremely long hours,” Avery recalled. “There were some times when whole weeks would go by, with all of us living in the same house, and I’d never see him. He was gone in the morning before I got up and didn’t come back until after I went to bed. We’d sometimes see each other on weekends, and it was kind of like we were having a reunion. ‘I haven’t seen you for a week,’ he’d say to me.” He brought his job home with him, too, his son said. “I remember there was a special telephone in the house that we were never allowed to use. It was connected to the Navy Department, and calls would come in at all hours regarding collisions at sea and problems he had to respond to immediately. For the family, it was death if you picked that phone up!”

If Avery worked hard, he played hard, too. His son remem-



Typical Avery: recording data in 1939 while others enjoy the view. (ATC Archives)

mediately to Harvard Law School.

It also is not clear from ATC’s records exactly how Avery came to know Judge Arthur Perkins or for how long they worked together before Avery moved from New England to Washington, D.C., or the actual sequence of events that led to Avery’s involvement in Trail work. The accepted story—put into early A.T. project histories by Avery himself—is that he joined Perkins’ Hartford, Connecticut, law firm as a junior partner after finishing law school and got infected with Perkins’ enthusiasm. But, there is no documentation of that, and Perkins’ own account of how he discovered the A.T. (see story page 29) casts some doubt on it. His son, Hal Avery, suspects that Avery clerked for Perkins during summers in his law-school years, then took the Washington job. According to a Navy document, Avery began his work as an admiralty lawyer immediately after law school, in 1923, taking a

bers that, when Av-ery did come home on the weekend, he threw himself wholly into physical activity and recreation. “He was what they talk about now as a ‘Type-A’ personality,” Hal Avery recalls. His son doesn’t recall him smoking and says he did not drink. “He was very intense, very dedicated, and put in many long hours. I remember when we lived in Washington we’d come down to pick him up at the gym, where he’d swim and run laps. He was a very health-conscious individual.”

Before long, Avery’s restless pursuit of weekend recreation led him to get involved with Washington-area hiking and outdoors clubs and to renew his old love of the woods. Years later, one of the founding members of the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, H.C. “Andy” Anderson, recalled how he had run into Avery for the first time on a hike with another local outdoors group, the Red Triangle Club:

“We discussed equipment for a while, and then I mentioned that P.L. Ricker, president of the Wild Flower Preservation Society, had been talking with me about organizing a club to work on the Appalachian Trail,” Anderson recalled. “Myron reacted with such enthusiasm that it appeared he had been thinking along the same line. He wanted to call a meeting right away.”

At the same time, Avery wrote his old mentor, Judge Perkins, to ask what he knew about the A.T.

Understanding Avery’s early involvement with ATC requires understanding the role of Judge Perkins. Neither had been part of that 1925 Appalachian Trail Conference, in Washington, held about the time Perkins was retiring from active legal work (his days as a municipal magistrate were long past by then). Nor were they in close contact. Early letters between the two are slightly stiff—not the familiar back-and-forth that developed once both became involved with the Trail. Once Judge Perkins retired in the mid-1920s, he finally had time to indulge a longtime love of the outdoors and a newly discovered passion for “mountaineering” reawakened on a trip to Katahdin (See story, page 29). It is tempting to believe that it was his young Maine protégé who first interested Perkins in “the greatest mountain,” but there is no proof of this.

By 1926, in any event, the well-connected and well-to-do Perkins had thrust himself into the upper echelon of leadership with the Appalachian Mountain Club, becoming chairman of the New England Trail Conference’s committee on through-trails and president of the AMC’s Connecticut Chapter. Unlike most of the other fresh-air enthusiasts, he had a passion not just for walking and climbing, but for scouting and building trails as well—especially the through-trails. The great through-

trail that needed building, he discovered, was the Appalachian Trail, a project that had been more or less languishing since the first A.T. conference. He heard Benton MacKaye speak at a January 1927 meeting of the New England Trail Conference and asked Mac-Kaye to his house in June, where Judge Perkins and members of the AMC’s Connecticut Chapter heard MacKaye read the same paper.

Listening to papers was not as satisfying as building trails, though, and Judge Perkins was impatient to see something done with MacKaye’s idea. His proximity to ATC’s nominal chairman, Major William Welch, and to MacKaye, together with his activity in the New England Trail Conference, allowed him to immerse himself in the A.T. project, even though he had no formal role in the organization. MacKaye’s attention had moved on to his newly discovered profession as a “regional planner.” Welch was busy running Palisades Interstate Park. Raymond Torrey seemed to be waiting for somebody to take the lead.



Avery (third from right) and the PATC at one of the club’s early work trips, in May 1928, about the time of the second A.T. Conference. The wheel was borrowed from Judge Perkins that spring. Afterward, Avery was rarely photographed without it. (ATC Archives)

Perkins took the job upon himself and began poking around in the organization’s embers to see if any further interest might be stirred up. During the summer of 1927, he climbed Katahdin himself again and “scouted” a possible path for a through-trail all the way to Moosehead Lake, midway to the New Hampshire border, and through his home stomping grounds along the Connecticut–New York border. He also corresponded with people in Massachusetts, New York, and Pennsylvania who had initially been interested in working on MacKaye’s idea for a through-trail, pushing them for information on how their sections were fitting into the plan, urging them to keep working on the project, and recruiting new blood for it—new blood like the twenty-eight-year-old Myron Avery.

About the same time, Avery’s blood was getting stirred up, too.

“There is in existence a committee on the Appalachian Trail, which was appointed several years ago at a conference held in Washington,” Perkins wrote in late 1927, after Avery asked for information about the A.T. “As far as I know, nothing has ever come of it...I am informed that there is a vacancy on this committee in the New England representation, and one of my friends is going to talk to Major Welch about appointing me to the place. If he does, and they will make me secretary, I shall try to do something with the committee to help the plan along.”

He encouraged Avery to go ahead and act. He didn't have to ask twice.

Within the next two weeks, Avery had gathered Anderson and a group of friends and set out to hike and mark sections of the Trail near Washington, primarily in northern Virginia, scouting as far south as Linden, with the aim of building a through-trail from Snickers Gap to Thornton Gap. On November 9, he wrote Judge Perkins, reporting what had been accomplished, asking for markers to identify the Trail, and asking who to report to regarding plans and progress. Perkins replied immediately, delighted by Avery's zeal: “While I haven't any authority to say so, not being an officer of the General Appalachian Trail Committee, I seem to be the one most interested, and if you want to report directly to me, I will be glad to keep in touch with Major Welch or anybody else interested.”

The next order of business was formalizing things, and, by the end of the month, Avery's band of A.T. enthusiasts had met, decided against trying to affiliate with the AMC or other established clubs, and named themselves the Po-tomac Appalachian Trail Club. Soon they were back on the ridgeline, cutting and marking new trail. By early December, Judge Perkins began pestering Welch to call a second Appalachian Trail Conference. “I am going to keep after him,” he told Avery, “and I hope he will call one. I will certainly be there if he does call it.”

Until then, despite the 1925 Washington meeting, the Appalachian Trail had been a mostly northeastern project, bandied about among established groups in New England and New York. Avery quickly surmised that it needed a broader base to thrive and that his new recruits couldn't operate long in isolation. With the coming of the new year, he began agitating to bring things back south again. “By dint of much labor, [PATC has] about 40 members and \$25 in the Treasury,” Avery wrote Perkins in February 1928. “The last thing I would urge with some diffidence is that the selection of Washington [as a site for the second A.T. conference] is due us in a way. We have

been in existence only a short time. With a limited membership, I doubt if any section could show greater accomplishment in the same time. Things are pretty well connected up this far south. From here, more interest needs to be aroused.”

Perkins was agreeable and saw in Avery's energy a chance to move the project forward. He pressed Avery to organize the second conference himself, with PATC as host. The main item for the agenda, Perkins suggested, should be organizing a federation of clubs and organizations along the lines of the New England Trail Conference. What was most important, he and Avery agreed, was to get the project out of the hands of the talkers and into the hands of the trail-builders.

“Whether Professor Bingham of Lafayette College could tell you about the eastern end of Pennsylvania I do not know,” he wrote Avery, discussing the route between Virginia and New York. “I am more uncertain about the western end. Mr. Shoe-

maker is supposed to know about that, but I have not been very much impressed with him as a practical man on the ground. He seems to depend a great deal upon paper organization, which is not what we want.”

The second conference, held in May 1928 in Washington, went off without a hitch. Avery and Perkins made a point of keeping it short on speeches and long on planning, with some hiking thrown in. In addition to practical problem-solving and presentations about the state of the project, it was agreed that a constitution was needed—a constitution along the lines Perkins and Avery had in mind. Perkins was assigned to draw one up and asked Avery to help him.

Afterwards, Perkins said, “My idea so far is that the A.T. Conference should be organized as a kind of federation of the different mountain clubs and park and forest commissions through which the Trail will pass, the governing body to consist of one delegate with an alternate from each one of these clubs or commissions, which would be empowered to act through

a rather small quorum, but that any other mountain clubs or commissions in the neighborhood may become members of the Conference if they are sufficiently interested in its objects.” That concept would prove to be the model for the ATC we know today.

The other major action of the 1928 convention was to formalize Perkins' role as the prime mover of the reconstituted conference. By early summer, he would be signing letters as acting chairman, and by 1929, after the third A.T. conference in Easton, Pennsylvania, he was named chairman, with Major Welch as honorary president. Avery had no formal role other than as president of PATC, but he and Perkins were members



Avery, probably in the Smokies (ATC Archives).

of an executive committee, along with Raymond Torrey and Arthur Comey of New England, with the job of writing the constitution. Using a draft originally written by Benton MacKaye, they reworked the organization's structure to reflect the preference for action over words, doers over talkers. Avery would continue to apply that test for the next twenty-three years.

An Unexpected Troublesome Business

A year and a half later, in December 1929, Perkins would suffer the first of a series of strokes that left him unable to govern the new federation he'd put together. "An unexpected troublesome piece of business" had come up, he wrote Avery, disguising it as news that his sister had been taken ill. But, four months later, after another stroke, he could no longer hide it. He wrote Avery that it had left him dizzy, barely able to make it down his stairs at home, and he was not able to lead the fourth A.T. conference in May 1930. On June 23 of that year, he wrote Avery, asking him to take over. "What I would like most would be to have you assume the title of Acting Chairman," he said, "as I did when Major Welch could not attend to things, though for another reason, and give as much time as you reasonably can to Trail interests." From that point on, although Judge Perkins would remain nominal chairman until his death in 1932, ATC was Avery's to guide. (Avery and MacKaye would serve together as pallbearers for the judge.)

By the time Avery took over running ATC in 1930, within three years of first writing Judge Perkins about the Trail, he had already accomplished an astounding amount of work. PATC was established and vital, publishing a regular newsletter, and sending work parties out to build and improve the Trail through the Shenandoah area and northern Virginia. Pennsylvania clubs were working with PATC and discussing how to get the Trail across the Great Appalachian Valley from Blue Mountain and route it down South Mountain through Maryland to Harpers Ferry. He had established contact with hiking enthusiasts in Tennessee, North Carolina, southwest Virginia, and Georgia, and clubs were developing there with a strong interest in the ATC. He had even hiked parts of the southern Appalachians in North Carolina and Tennessee, trying to find the best route to Georgia. He and Judge Perkins had put together publications that standardized the marking and construction of the Trail. And, once Perkins was no longer able to attend to things in New England, Avery began focusing on the question of how to get the Trail to Katahdin in Maine.

What Avery did at ATC in the next twenty-two years, be-

fore his death in 1952, has been well-documented and is discussed elsewhere in this issue. Within eight years, the Trail was complete from Georgia to Maine. Close relationships with government land-management agencies, such as the National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service, were in place and would be a foundation for later federal land acquisition. Avery walked every mile of the Trail, measuring and taking notes as he went. The first guidebooks would be published in 1931.

Less well-known is that, during this same period, he was devoting even more time and energy to his work in admiralty law than he was to the Trail. His work with the Shipping Board continued until 1939, when he moved with his family to New York City, where he became special assistant to the U.S. attorney there, in charge of both civil and military shipping litigation. He tried cases, wrote briefs, and handled claims as the U.S. Merchant Marine and U.S. Navy became more and more

deeply involved in supplying America's future World War II allies in their fight against Nazi Germany. Though Avery had briefly served in the military during World War I, his son, Hal Avery, says that it was nominal service—essentially officer training during his college years at Bowdoin—that never led to any active duty. Later, though, in 1928, he was commissioned as an officer in the Navy Reserve, right about the time his involvement with ATC was beginning. In 1942, as World War II took hold, he was called to active duty and given the rank of lieutenant commander. He was promoted to commander in 1943 and to captain when the war ended. His work for the Navy continued to be related to legal matters—international law, jurisdiction over armed forces, base agreements, settling airplane accidents, and so forth. For much of this period, he ran the legal office by himself, at a time when its work increased fourfold, which helps explain his reduced activity with the ATC during the war years. The letter recommending his promotion to commander cited work that

invariably had him at his desk long after regular working hours.

After Avery's death, an obituary by Jean Stephenson in *Appalachian Trailway News* mentioned "nerve fatigue" that afflicted him after World War II. It was a euphemism. In plain terms, he was working himself to death. Hal Avery says it was the stress of his intense approach to work and play. How early this began manifesting itself is not clear, but, by late 1946, Avery had written a friend that he would be unavailable for a while. Later, he admitted that being "unavailable" meant going into a military medical facility for three weeks to be treated for "hypertension." The problem had only gotten worse while he was being treated, he said, and he had checked himself out. Hal Avery said his father was discharged from the Navy in 1947.



Hal (left) and Robert Avery with their father's measuring wheel, on the A.T. in the 1930s. (Courtesy of Hal Avery)

More and more often, Hal Avery found himself driving his father places—to the Trail for work trips, to the gym for exercise, on vacations and tours where he would try to relax and ease up. Jeanette Avery no longer traveled with her husband. In the early days of their marriage, she had been a frequent participant at PATC outings and a companion its on hikes. Coming from a ranching background, she enjoyed the outdoors and tried to bring the family along. In one account of an ATC meeting in 1930, guidebook editor Harold Allen wrote to Judge Perkins, that “Avery’s baby seized the occasion to swallow a huge rusty spike, which caused consternation at the time, but coincided with the iron constitution he has inherited and has reappeared since in the orthodox way.”

Hal Avery remembers the family going on camping and hiking trips together. “It was fun, even the work trips. There were whole groups of families on them, other groups of people and kids to meet.” But, none of the family members, finally, could share Myron Avery’s passion for it—the passion that sent him out again and again in his spare time to measure yet one more section or scout one more a new route. “After he died, my brother and I were off on our own careers, and our mother’s health did not permit her to stay involved. I suppose that, finally, Trail work was his interest, his desire. The rest of us just basically didn’t have that same desire.” Though Mrs. Avery would outlive her husband, her eyesight was bad, and her health was never again good, he said. “Still, she was always very supportive of his work on the Trail. She realized it was his only means of release.”

It isn’t clear exactly when Avery suffered his first heart attack, but Hal Avery thinks that he had at least three of them and recalls that it was after a heart attack that his father was forced to retire on disability from his work with the government’s admiralty department, in early 1952, about when he announced that he no longer wished to be considered for the position of ATC chairman. Even so, Avery never let up. His final months as chairman are as full of correspondence and reports as ever, and his last report to the Board on the state of ATC shows his characteristic interest in detail and in comprehensiveness. The organization he handed over to Murray Stephens was well-oiled and running smoothly.

Sadly, Avery’s retirement only lasted a few weeks. Restless with his own inactivity, he began researching family history, tracing the Avery family’s long, varied background in New England, Maine, and Canada. For many years, he had been taking the family north to the family home in Lubec during the summers as a way of working with the Maine A.T. Club and escaping the sweltering summer heat of Washington. In the summer of ‘52, he asked Hal Avery to drive him from Lubec

a-cross the border on a research trip to Canada, looking for information about the family’s history in the Acadia region, before the Acadians were displaced and it became Nova Scotia. Father and son were staying at a hotel in the town of Annapolis Royal but had left it for the day to tour Fort Anne National Historic Park. He did not die at the hotel, as was later reported, but on the grounds of the park.

The supreme irony of Myron Avery’s life is that so much of his drive and intensity was directed toward helping build a project, the Appalachian Trail, founded on a philosophy expounded by Benton MacKaye that rejected exactly the sort of stressful, workaholic lifestyle Avery lived.

When the two founders broke off their relationship with each other in 1936 over the question of the Trail’s coexistence with skyline highways such as the Blue Ridge Parkway, it was

essentially because Avery joined the battle of ideas with a lawyer’s win-at-all-costs intensity and would not countenance a challenge to his mission to build the Trail—even from its patriarch. He confronted Mac-Kaye with the fact that the Trail’s first proponent since 1925 had been content to cheerlead from the sidelines as the thing got built, rarely walking on it and never helping to build it. Only as it neared completion was Mac-Kaye involving himself actively again, threatening to undo the relationships with clubs and the government that Avery had worked hard to establish. Mac-Kaye, in turn, accused Avery of being a bully and missing the forest for the path. They never spoke or corresponded again. Only after Avery’s death was Mac-Kaye’s role again actively honored by the leadership of the Conference.

“I don’t recall that my father had much of a sense of humor,” Hal Avery said. “He enjoyed things, to be sure. He

enjoyed other people’s humor. He liked talking to people at parties, and I remember many parties at our house with his friends from the Trail and from work. And, certainly he had a great deal of love and interest in his family and made a point of providing very well for my brother, Bob, and myself. But no, he was not one for joking around.” Similarly, while Avery clearly loved working on the Trail and hiking it and could enjoy the relaxation and reflection that others found on it, he was finally not able to enjoy it himself in the way that so many others have in the years since his death—as a place to slow down, to turn off the clock, to put away the measuring wheel, so to speak, and simply connect with the wilderness around the footpath.

Is it better for a life to burn with brief brilliance or in a long, steady glow? Who’s to say? MacKaye, twenty years Avery’s senior, went on to outlive him by another twenty-three years, dying in 1975 at the end of a long, slow, philosophical life marked by many deep thoughts and grand notions but few concrete ac-



Avery, after his health began to fail, and son in the late 1940s. (Courtesy of Hal Avery)

accomplishments. Ironically, it is likely that his renown as the dreamer who founded the Appalachian Trail would never have been accorded had there not been someone like Avery to actually build the thing. And, it is likely that Avery, for all his amazing drive and focused energy, would be forgotten as just another take-charge lawyer if he hadn't discovered a great project that needed doing and discovered a passion for something he

himself might never be able to simply relax and enjoy.

In retrospect, if their conflict was probably inevitable, their accomplishments remain something to marvel at. Today, both men remain at the heart and soul of the Appalachian Trail and the Appalachian Trail Conference. Seventy-five years after its founding, their warring spirits still guide the organization that each of them, in his own way, invented.

Judge Perkins

in His Own Words

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following unedited sketch of Judge Arthur Perkins, written in pencil with his characteristically elegant calligraphy, appears in ATC's archives appended to a letter addressed to Fred Davis of the Natural Bridge A.T. Club. It was apparently written in 1930, after Perkins had suffered a stroke, but before the May conference. It is marked with word counts, so it may have been meant to be read aloud at the conference.

By Arthur Perkins

Judge Arthur Perkins of Hartford Conn. (though he hasn't been a judge in a good many years now) Chairman of the Board of Managers of the Appalachian Trail Conference, generally familiarly known as "J.P." by his mountaineering friends, didn't get really started in the mountaineering business until he was well along in the fifties. With the exception of a trip to Switzerland when he was a young man, and did a little climbing in the vicinity of the Matterhorn without previous training or experience—which didn't have the effect of recommending mountaineering as a delightful sport, but in fact had exactly the opposite effect—it was not until six or seven years ago when he spent a summer near Mount Chocorua in the White Mountains, and, for the lack of other occupations, climbed it several times. It was then that he experienced for the first time the thrill and delight of the mountaineer, and his interest in mountains and in the construction and maintenance of



Judge Perkins nailing wooden directional sign. (ATC Archives)

mountain trails began, which has continued unabated and even increased to the present day.

On account of this newly developed interest, he joined the Appalachian Mountain Club ("hereinafter referred to as the A.M.C.") an organization of four or five thousand members, mostly New Englanders, with headquarters in Boston, which among other things runs short excursions for its members to hills around Boston and other centers of activity, and to the White Mountains, and longer ones, both in summer and winter to more distant points, the longest excursions so far being to Switzerland in one direction and the Hawaiian Islands in the other.

His first trip with members of this Club was to Mount Katahdin in Maine, where he got his first taste of real mountaineering, and was so delighted with the place that he ran a private party to Katahdin the next year, and the third year assisted in the leadership of a second AMC party. Besides he made several winter trips to the White Mountains.

After the third trip to Katahdin it became evident that if he was ever going to see any other mountains he must break away from there, so three years ago he went to England where he did a little climbing in Wales and the Lake District, and joined an AMC party at La Barad in the French Alps, and a year ago last summer was a



member of another party in the Canadian Rockies near Jasper, British Columbia, though in neither of his excursions did he do any very high climbing with the expert climbers, as that was somewhat beyond his powers—

For two years about this time he was Chairman of the Connecticut Chapter of the AMC, a subsidiary organization of members in that state, for the purpose of running local excursions.

Three or four years ago he became one of the officers of the New England Trail Conference (N.E.T.C.), an organization of delegates from the mountain clubs of New England for the purpose of increasing interest in mountain trails and coordinating their efforts so as to bring about connecting and through trails in various localities.

At the first annual meeting of the N.E.T.C. that he attended he first heard of the plan for an Appalachian Trail “from Maine to Georgia,” and was immediately tremendously taken with the suggestion. At that meeting an address was delivered on the subject by Mr. Benton MacKaye, who originated the idea, and who had brought about the organization of the Appalachian Trail Conference at Washington D.C. several years before. A short time afterwards he made the acquaintance of Major Welch of the Interstate Palisades Park, then the chairman of the conference, who when he was satisfied of his interest in the project, appointed him one of the New England delegates, in the place of one of the delegates who had moved away.

An annual meeting of the organization was held at Washington in 1928 at which it was decided to reorganize the Conference so as to make it more of a federation of mountain clubs along the route, somewhat on the plan of the N.E.T.C. which had been so successful and at the following annual meeting in Easton, Pa., a new constitution was adopted, and “J.P.” was elected Chairman of the Board of Managers and was re-elected this year at the meeting at Skyland, Va., which he was unable to attend on account of illness.

In the year when he made the third trip to Katahdin he started actual work on the Appalachian Trail by roughly scouting and locating the part of it in Connecticut, about thirty-five miles long, and with the help of other members of the party, locating and marking temporarily about forty miles of the northern part of it beginning at that mountain and extending about forty miles to the west.

He has also made several trips to promote interest in the project and make the acquaintance of members of clubs along the route, and those likely to be interested in it, including several in New England and Pennsylvania and two years ago this fall made a southern trip to southern Virginia, the Great Smokies and Northern Georgia.

On account of the illness above mentioned he hasn't been able to take a very active part in promoting the enterprise this year, but hopes that improving health will enable him to “get on the trail” again next year.

Murray Stevens

A Time for Transition and Consolidation

By Robert A. Rubin

After the drama of the Avery years—rescuing the dream of the Trail, building the organization, recruiting new members and new clubs, linking the 2,000 miles of white blazes for the first time, and then doing almost the whole thing again after World War II—it was perhaps inevitable that ATC and its clubs would take some time to sit back, take a deep breath, rest a bit, and admire and enjoy what they'd built. When Murray H. Stevens took over the ATC chairman's job from Avery, it wasn't clear where the Conference would go next.

Stevens had been involved with the A.T. from almost the very beginning. As a member of the New York chapter of the Appalachian Mountain Club, he attended the 1929 conference at Easton, Pennsylvania, during the first push by Judge Perkins and Myron Avery to reenergize ATC, and soon impressed Avery with his work. He was of Avery's generation—four years older, in fact, born in 1895. He was a native of Massachusetts and a graduate of Princeton University and fought during World War I, where he served with the Corps of Engineers as a construction engineer in France, staying there until 1919. After the war, he returned to civilian life and took a series of engineering jobs, mostly around New York.

Like Avery, Stevens had been an enthusiastic “tramper” and traveler in his youth, leading his first hike at age twelve, climbing in the White Mountains, biking to New York from New Hampshire's Lake Winnepesaukee, and undertaking a long-distance canoe trip along several New England rivers. He met his wife, Gladys Richards, on an AMC outing, and they honeymooned by walking the length of the Mahoosuc and Presidential ranges together.

Stevens took the lead in scouting, blazing, and building the A.T. between Schaghticoke Mountain, Connecticut, and Bear Mountain, New York. The difficulty of completing the section



Murray Stevens (center) with (l-r) Max Sauter, Marion Park, Sayde Giller, Jim Cragorn, and Jim Denton. (ATC Archives)

day's walk apart along the length of the Trail.

However, as Stevens was preparing to hand over the chairman's gavel to Stan Murray and the Conference's direction to a new generation, it became increasingly clear that relocation was only a temporary answer. As he left office, he set them a new challenge.

"I consider the only solution for the permanence of the Appalachian Trail as a 'wilderness footpath' is in public ownership," he wrote in his closing report to the Conference. "The ever-increasing population and constant expansion of the seaboard, with resultant growth in rural living and development, leaves no alternative. I would propose a 'green belt' of public lands with the Trail acting as a spinal cord linking them together."

Stevens continued to be an active member of the Conference throughout the 1960s, helping to remeasure the

was as much from dealing with landowners and negotiating rights of way as it was clearing the path. He and Avery became close friends in the 1930s, despite occasional disagreements over matters such as guidebook copyrights. During World War II, when Avery was stationed in New York and Trail activity lagged, he would join Stevens on two-man work trips to keep the New York section open. Vice chairman at the time of Avery's stepping down, he was an obvious choice to carry on Avery's work.

Stevens' nine years as ATC chairman, from 1952 to 1961, were largely uneventful. The footpath stayed open, problems arose and were solved, club memberships grew, and high-profile thru-hikers such as Grandma Gatewood earned publicity for the Trail, but the changes were mostly incremental. In retrospect, perhaps the most important trend during his chairmanship was the slowly growing awareness that the A.T. was seriously threatened by growth from the booming U.S. postwar economy.

At first, the answer seemed to be relocation. Clubs scouted ambitious new routes, moving it away from the routes of convenience first blazed in the 1930s. Most notable was relocation of the southern terminus from Mt. Oglethorpe to Springer Mountain in 1958 and a major relocation away from the Blue Ridge Parkway in southwest Virginia and eastern Tennessee that saw the Trail moved to its present route, running from Roan Mountain through Damascus and up to the Alleghenies north of the New River, rejoining the Blue Ridge near Roanoke. Relocation was also considered in northern Virginia, along the North Mountain route now known as the Tuscarora Trail. Stevens encouraged the program, spearheaded by Stan Murray, to establish the A.T. shelter system, building new lean-tos a

Trail through the Whites and Mahoosucs late in the decade and writing the description of the Trail for New Hampshire that appeared in the Congressional Record as a step toward federal protection of the footpath. He died in 1984 at age 89.

Stan Murray

and the Push for Federal A.T. Protection

By Judy Jenner

Outdoor recreation "is a right of Americans—not only something to be enjoyed but vital to our spirit," former ATC Chairman Stanley A. Murray said in 1989. Preservation of the environment "is essential to America's spiritual well-being."

Murray, speaking to a group of southern park supporters long after his fourteen-year chairmanship ended in 1975, had nevertheless remained active as chair emeritus and was ac-

tively promoting the concept of an “Appalachian Greenway.”

“If the Appalachian Trail is to survive as a continuous footpath along the Appalachian mountains and if it is to offer a wilderness experience,” he continued, “then more than a narrow path winding through second-home developments, with background noises of chainsaws and barking dogs, a trail hidden in underbrush and trees away from panoramic scenery— more than this is needed.”

The address came soon after the Board of Managers had formally reiterated its support of the greenway concept he had advanced for two decades. It was one of Murray’s last speeches before his death the following April.

Over the course of forty years of work with the conference, Stan Murray helped cut and blaze many hundreds of miles of treadway himself, in the tradition of his predecessors Myron Avery and Murray Stevens. Perhaps more impressive, though, was Murray’s ability to lead ATC from a time when simply building and maintaining a physical footpath was enough, to one that demanded building a legislative framework for a protected A.T. and cooperative management with the federal government.

Slightly built and quiet in demeanor, Murray’s Maine roots were barely discernible after years of living in the South. He graduated from the University of Maine and earned a graduate degree in science from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. During World War II, part of his military service took him to Oak Ridge, Tennessee, where he first began hiking in the Smoky Mountains. He liked the area and, in 1949, began a thirty-seven-year career as a chemical engineer at Tennessee Eastman Company in Kingsport.

Murray was a passionate conservationist who did not like to compromise. Late in life, he said he feared each generation was compromising the environment more and more, but friendly persuasion was the tool he chose to use in defense of his views.

One of Murray’s earliest A.T. successes was leading the Tennessee Eastman Club’s sixty-five-mile Trail relocation over Roan Mountain. It took three years to complete. It could have been easier, Murray said, “if we had avoided Hump Mountain, but we *had* to include it.” To complete it, he marshalled the support of the Cherokee National Forest, the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Boy Scouts, and many landowners. Today, a memorial to Murray stands near Hump Mountain, one of the most scenic spots along the Trail across the southern balds.

Murray’s work on the Roan relocation led, over time, to his creation of the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy in 1974 with the express goal of protecting from development many thousands of acres along the Roan Mountain massif by any means available. SAHC was an outgrowth of



*Stan Murray (r) accepts the chairman’s gavel from Murray Stevens in 1961.
 (ATC Archives)*

an ATC committee he created—and another intermediate organization that disbanded—and was just one example of his foresight in pushing the greenway idea when others on the Board wanted to focus purely on protecting the footpath. He was president of the conservancy for eleven years and was named its first executive director in 1988. Before his death, he saw the Trust for A.T. Lands (now the ATC Land Trust) and other land-buying conservation groups following SAHC’s model as facilitators in acquiring greenways.

His greenway idea was an old one, growing out of the “trailway” fostered by ATC leaders as early as 1925. Murray, who led the battle for a protected A.T. in the 1960s, recognized in the early 1970s that federal legislation would not provide enough of a buffer zone against encroaching development.

The greenway he proposed would follow the crest of the mountains and provide two buffer zones. A “primitive zone,” mostly owned by public agencies, would be immediately adjacent to the Trail. A “countryside zone,” comprising predominantly private lands subject to local land-use controls, would extend up to ten miles on either side. Today, the greenway concept he identified is at the heart of the Conference’s attempt to protect the “viewshed” along the Trail.

He was first elected to the Board in 1955 and, for the following six years, led efforts to have campsites (including lean-tos or shelters) every ten miles along the Trail. In 1961, when he was elected chair, ATC had three hundred members, and the Board met once every three years. In those days, many in the Trail community feared federal protection would result in a government takeover of the Trail. Murray felt strongly that federal protection was vital and went to work selling the idea to ATC members and legislators.

“How will we, over the next thirty to fifty years, or even the next ten years, preserve our beloved Appalachian Trail in any kind of primitive environment?” he said in 1964. “It does not take a very big crystal ball to see that some degree of public support, recognition, and protection will be required.”

In the years before the 1968 National Trails System Act, Murray cultivated individual, group, and corporate support in each of the Trail states, not only for passage of the legislation, but for key state agencies to begin work on their own protection efforts or, at a minimum, to put the Trail on their maps.

Each year the effort in Congress was rebuffed, Murray came back stronger than before in his determination to keep the momentum going. In 1967, he told ATC members, “We’re on the threshold of a new era.... Upon passage of the bill, the first big job to be done will be to define the route and right-of-way of the Trail.”

In 1966, Murray championed another issue—wilderness protection for the Smokies. In 1967, he was among six hundred people who gathered on a rainy day in the Smokies to peacefully demonstrate their support. The sun came out just as Murray began to read an inspiring letter he had secured from Benton MacKaye. A year later, plans for a road across the Smokies were scrapped.

Throughout his chairmanship, Murray stressed the importance of volunteers. He often spoke of the need to get more Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and other youth groups involved in Trail activities, viewing them as a resource for Trail-maintenance projects. He also championed “the free spirit of the individual worker, without whose continued care and stewardship the Trail might become something without a soul.” With that in mind, he established the first Board committee on Trail-maintenance standards. He carefully worded his encouragement to maintainers when, in 1971, he said, “The engineer needs to be an artist in laying out and designing new trails. His task is to subtly blend his own accomplishments with the naturalness of the surroundings and avoid any indication of contrivance.”

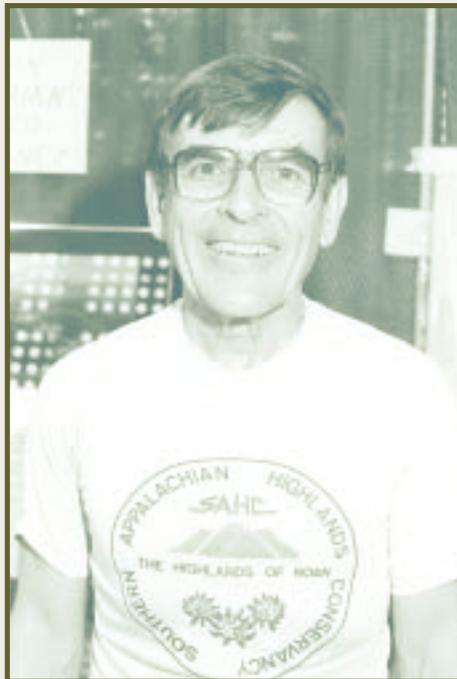
When Murray stepped down as chair, he estimated he had been working forty hours a week on Conference matters. The organization was one he had helped streamline. The Board was meeting annually; ATC had moved to Harpers Ferry; and, for the first time, it had a paid staff.

In 1989, three months after he had surgery to remove a malignant brain tumor, Murray was backpacking on Roan Mountain. He was nearly 65 and planning to section-hike the whole A.T., something he had put off for many years. That may have been the only goal this guiding light of the A.T. was unable to attain.

Living Memory

Six Conference Chairs in an Evolving Trail Landscape

By Judy Jenner



Murray in 1980s promoting SAHC. (ATC Photo)

From 1975 to the present, four men and two women have chaired the Appalachian Trail Conference, each bringing to the Board of Managers a different background and management style, each nevertheless in tune with the times during which they served. All six had come up through the ranks—starting as Trail maintainers—and had served on the Board before being elected chair.

Unlike their predecessors—Welch, Perkins, Avery, Stevens, and Murray—the six modern-era chairs (all of whom are still alive) came into office with the responsibility of leading a Conference that had a paid staff and responsibility for part of the national scenic trail system. Many of the challenges they faced had to do with balancing the needs of Conference members with the requirements of the land-management partners along the length of the Trail.

The first two—George M. Zobelein and Charles L. Pugh—came from business and finance backgrounds. Their expertise in those areas came at a time (1975–1980) when ATC finances were shaky and when the organization was struggling to build relationships with the clubs and agency partners. Both men, at different times, recognized a need for ATC to reassert itself as a viable organization, to protect the role of volunteers, and to establish more than a minimal presence in the growing federal effort to protect the Trail.

George M Zobelein

Zobelein, an accountant and veteran of the New York–New Jersey Trail Conference since the mid-1960s, served two terms as chair, from 1975 to 1979. He took a businessman’s approach to the office, directing a professional review of the Conference’s investments and an expanded fundraising program. He helped eliminate a \$40,000 deficit in one year, spurred the acquisition of a permanent headquarters in Harpers Ferry, and initiated a five-year plan aimed at ensuring management of Trail lands by volunteers.

Zobelein also recognized the need for volunteers to learn new skills in Trail-building and maintenance to get them ready for their new federal responsibilities of managing the Trail. It was a far-sighted approach that was compatible with his vision of a more professional Trail organization.

The first National Park Service acquisition of Trail lands involved a thirty-acre tract in his native New York in 1979. Seven months later, as Zobelein’s term was ending, President Jimmy Carter predicted (before Congress) that the A.T. land-acquisition project would be substantially completed in 1981.

Viewing Carter’s prediction in retrospect, Zobelein believes it was plausible, but political changes in Washington (after the 1980 election) meant that the acquisition project would take many more years to complete. Then, as now, he said he and other Trail people were looking beyond the footpath itself, viewing a corridor buffer “that would never be enough.”

Zobelein now works part-time as an accountant in New York City. The message he often brings to Board meetings, as an active chair emeritus, is that ATC is not doing enough in the area of public relations, so that it would have the “instant name recognition” that the Trail has. He also feels there should be more younger people and business men and women on the Board.



George Zobelein (ATC Photo)

Charles L. Pugh

After serving as a Board member and vice chair for nearly a decade, Charles L. Pugh was elected chair in August 1979. In a letter early that year to the nominating committee, he voiced his reluctance to accept the top spot, citing his many existing commitments.

At the time, he was a senior vice president of a brokerage firm, owner of a printing company, president of the Richmond (Virginia) School Board, and treasurer of the board of trustees of the Richmond United Way.

Pugh nevertheless heralded a “new partnership era” and insisted on preserving “the volunteer tradition.” He spoke eloquently about the need for ATC and its clubs to set a national example for public-private cooperative ventures and countered any doubts about the volunteers’ ability to manage the Trail.

“The role of the volunteer is the very soul of the Trail,” he told government partners in the A.T. project.

He also was a businessman who recognized the need for financial support of Conference programs from outside the organization. During his tenure as chair, he welcomed ATC’s first corporate member.

But, 1980 was a year of internal turmoil at ATC. Executive Director Henry Lautz resigned. Even as Pugh and others on the search committee for a new executive director enthusiastically chose Larry Van Meter for the position, dissension among some members of the Board and staff—primarily over finances, priorities, and chain of command—escalated. In September of that year, after thirteen months as chair, Pugh resigned.

Pugh enumerated those areas of dissension in his letter of resignation. He felt the autonomy of the Board chair and ATC executive director had been undermined by others within the organization and that there was no real cohesiveness among Board members or a willingness to change the situation. He also cited the demands of his work and civic responsibilities, his family, and his distance from Harpers Ferry as impediments to the time commitment that he felt resolving the internal squabbles required.

About two years later, when his school-board commitment was completed, Pugh and his family moved to coastal Maine, where he built a house. He has enjoyed a part-time work style ever since.

Pugh is an ATC life member and stays abreast of the Trail project, mostly through the ATN. When he looks back, he says he fondly remembers his early Trail days as a member of the Old Dominion A.T. Club.



Charles Pugh (ATC Photo)

He recalls being so dedicated, he was working on the Trail when one of his daughters was born—"and, she never lets me forget it."

Pugh, who hiked about eight hundred miles of the Trail in different states, says he continues to support the volunteer tradition and is pleased with efforts to protect additional corridor lands. Looking back, he feels he did his best for the organization and is proud that his major overhaul of ATC's bylaws and constitution, approved by the membership in 1979, have largely "stood the test of time." He also feels that, as a vice chair, he shared Zoebelin's vision to move ATC "from a desk-drawer operation to a professional organization."

Ruth E. Blackburn

Former ATC Chair Charlie Pugh recently said Ruth E. Blackburn was the "perfect person" to succeed him.

"She was noncontroversial, was respected, had a long-time involvement in the Trail project," Pugh said. "It was like pouring oil on those troubled waters."

Most A.T. folks around during the early 1980s would agree. The silver-haired dynamo from Bethesda, Maryland, had for years supported her husband, Fred, in his activities with the Potomac A.T. Club and ATC. She joined the effort in the early 1940s, nearly two decades after her husband. Both Blackburns became legendary Trail icons during their time, often maintaining trails side-by-side. Both held numerous offices in the two organizations and were honored on many occasions at local and national levels.

When Pugh resigned, two vice chairs—Blackburn and Jim Botts—were named interim cochairs. It was a brief phenomenon in ATC history, lasting less than two months. Botts lived in Tennessee.

Blackburn, only an hour from Harpers Ferry, was the logical full-time choice. Blackburn agreed to fly solo, and, in 1981, she was elected to a two-year term.

Blackburn already had extensive experience with the fledgling land-acquisition project. She had led Trail-protection efforts in the late 1970s throughout areas of Maryland, West Virginia, and Virginia, often leading National Park Service survey teams with the flagging tape. Her expertise came from countless hours she had spent in courthouses throughout the three states, pouring over land records, searching tax records and real-estate ads, and talking to landowners. On more than one occasion, she left Park Service realty specialists scratching their heads in amazement over the groundwork she had prepared for them.

Blackburn had a reassuring voice and boundless energy. When the Reagan administration in 1981 and 1982 imposed a moratorium on all federal land-acquisition funds, she joined

others testifying before congressional committees, imploring the government to get on with the Trail project.

In 1983, Blackburn received a Conservation Service Award from the U.S. Department of the Interior of that administration (see photo on page 35). The citation read, in part, "She is a recognized authority on Trail-protection issues in northern Virginia and Maryland, and she has been the single most influential volunteer in shaping the successful National Park Service Trail-protection program."

Blackburn was a principal source of the Park Service's confidence in the leadership of ATC. And that, in part, led to the NPS decision to turn over management responsibility for Trail lands to the Conference. She viewed that historic document, signed in 1984, after her term as chair had ended, simply as "the completion of one cycle" in ATC's history.

Throughout her three years as chair, Blackburn drove to Harpers Ferry almost every week. Those were working visits to the offices of the executive director or the Park Service. She often brought cookies or brownies she had baked. "Goodies for the staff," she would say.

Blackburn was uncomfortable when people "made a fuss" about her position at ATC, and she would brush off any accolade demurely. But, her presence in any room—from the kitchenette at ATC to the congressional chambers—was comforting. She commanded such respect that, in addition to her official work, she was a sort of unofficial "goodwill ambassador" for Trail.

As a chair emeritus, Blackburn long stayed involved in ATC activities, serving on Board committees and as the conference's primary overseer of the Bears Den hostel. She continued her personal, one-woman public-relations effort to garner increased support for the Trail by frequently meeting with federal agency partners.

After one such meeting, she declared, in mock disgust, "I have been at Shenandoah National Park all day talking with the new park superintendent. They change so often. He is the third one I have trained."

Her husband, Fred Blackburn, passed away in 1990 at age 88. Ruth Elizabeth Blackburn, who turned 93 this year, now lives with one of her sons in Prescott, Arizona.



Ruth Blackburn and Interior Secretary James Watt (ATC Photo)

Raymond E. Hunt

The Appalachian Trail "is a living, changing thing" that requires a "vigorous and flexible organization," Raymond F. Hunt, sixth ATC chair, once wrote. The chemical engineer from Kingsport, Tennessee, was vigorous and flexible himself and continued Blackburn's tradition as peacemaker and consensus-builder throughout the six years he served as chair, beginning in 1983. He also was the first of three chairs in a

row to be elected to the full three-term limit in that position.

A native of Pennsylvania, Hunt began a lifelong career at Tennessee Eastman Company soon after graduating from Yale University. His introduction to the Trail project began in the early 1950s, with the Tennessee Eastman Hiking Club in one of its biggest undertakings. Members rerouted the Trail over Roan Mountain in a project Hunt thought “would be the ruination of the club” because it was so extensive in scope (three years and sixty-five miles). He began working closely with the Forest Service partners in the South and wound up coordinating many of his club’s relocations.

During his first three decades as a Trail maintainer, Hunt hiked many sections of the A.T. He began venturing farther from home with his hikes, often joined by club colleagues, putting the pieces together until, in 1988, he wound up at Thornton Gap, Virginia, where he officially completed his 38-year, 2,100-mile odyssey. Joining him at the end were his wife, Martha, and close friends. “You really can’t do it [a Trail hike] without a support system,” he observed.

Hunt began volunteering for Board assignments in the mid-1970s. He was a strong advocate of ATC’s publications program and edited two editions of the Tennessee–North Carolina guide. In 1977, he created the first *Data Book* and continued revamping and perfecting the annual publication for five more years.

He said his engineering background led to a fascination with numbers and making sets of numbers into graphs he’d use to simplify an issue. In 1983, he quipped that, by the year 2228, the Trail would be four thousand miles long due to relocations. On another occasion, pondering the geographic center of the A.T., he suggested ATC build a portable cairn atop a wagon and move it each year to the actual midpoint. The variability of the Trail’s center, he said, would persist “as long as maintainers North and South keep trying to pull it closer to them by implementing longer relocations.”

It was just such humor Hunt often injected into tense situations. Then, he’d laugh heartily and so infectiously that others simply had to join him.

He once revealed his “secret” to backpacking: When hiking uphill, he let his companions do the talking and ask questions. He’d wait until the downhill treks to answer them. Another time, he proposed a society for people so attached to their old boots they couldn’t discard them. He wrote an *ATN* article about it and hosted a conference workshop to discuss the matter—to which no one came.

In 1988, knowing of a powerful congressional chair-

man’s penchant for golf, Hunt tailored his testimony accordingly. He presented a large map showing golf courses close to the A.T.

Hunt appeared many times before Congress, appealing for funding to complete the federal acquisition of Trail lands. Of the first such occasion, in 1984, he wrote, “We appeared as volunteers and amateurs, rather than skilled professionals, and that was probably helpful.”

As chair, Hunt extensively reorganized Board committees and championed ATC’s first steps toward a more comprehensive fund-raising program. He signed the historic 1984 document in which the Park Service turned over management responsibility for the Trail to ATC and its clubs. The hardest part about implementing the agreement, he wrote in 1985, was “mobilizing the volunteer effort and resisting being drawn into the complications of bureaucracy.” He characterized it as “the most important document that I ever hoped to sign.” (Years later, he admitted, “I had overlooked my marriage license.”)

Hunt convened the first-ever weekend meeting of A.T. club presidents in 1985 and called it “an event waiting to happen.” He created a public-relations committee because he felt ATC had a “good story to tell.” Public knowledge “of our efforts builds a strong constituency that yields political and financial support,” he wrote in 1987.

In 1989, he addressed the need for a resource-management policy to protect the Trail’s flora and fauna and other natural features. ATC, he said, needed to add a land ethic “that goes beyond what is required by laws and regulations but is a direct descendant of the values that inspired the Trail project in the first place.”

Hunt retired from his job at Tennessee Eastman in 1987. Now 76, he remains an active committee member as a chair emeritus.



Ray Hunt, right, with Senator (and presidential candidate) Robert Dole, who wandered into a 1987 celebration in Hanover, N.H., of the 50th anniversary of the Trail. (ATC Photo)

Margaret C. Drummond

Margaret Drummond, like her pre-decessor, Ray Hunt, brought to the Board an analytical approach to issues, befitting a scientific background. Drummond, who earned a doctorate in microbiology from Emory University, retired from a thirty-year career in teaching and research at Emory’s school of medicine in 1988. The following year, she was elected ATC chair, a position she held for the six-year limit.

From the start, Drummond proclaimed herself “an avowed committee advocate,” who, largely due to her university background, was accustomed to building consensus. It was the hallmark of her chairmanship.

She once admitted, “No Trail person professes to want or to enjoy” meetings, but they “are essential for the maintenance

and management of the Appalachian Trail.”

Drummond recognized that, since the Park Service delegated management responsibility for the Trail to ATC and its clubs in 1984, the role of the volunteer had changed. When she signed a ten-year renewal of the delegation agreement in 1994, she said Trail-builders and maintainers had become land managers as well. “There seems to be nothing that volunteers, with the support of ATC and A.T. agency partners, cannot, and will not, do to protect the Appalachian Trail.”

As chair (and vice chair before), Drummond is credited for tireless efforts to strengthen the cooperative management system. She once jokingly said she might lose her credibility if she used the “p” word once more, referring to “partnership.” But, she was successful in calming many controversial issues and forging new alliances because she recognized that the Trail project was, in fact, a partnership project.

In managing the Trail cooperatively, she said “every decision must be a joint decision—that is where our system most often breaks down.” The only way the partnership could work, she insisted, is “by meetings, listening to each other, realizing and accepting each other’s constraints, finding solutions, negotiating and compromising when necessary, accepting successes and occasional failures, and respecting each other.”

Drummond used the same technique in forging consensus among Board and staff members. “The real work of the Conference is done by its committees,” she said, once relating the careful and lengthy process she used to create and staff more than a dozen standing Board committees.

In a 1994 *ATN* column, she enumerated current threats to the Trail, such as expanding ski areas, transmission lines, and highways: “For a satisfactory resolution of these conflicts, we need the wisdom of Solomon and the patience of Job. And, we need the support of...all who believe the experience of a primitive Trail is an experience worth preserving.” The persevering woman with a soft-spoken lilt in her voice was, once again, working to build consensus, this time among Conference members.

Drummond, who grew up in Atlanta, joined the Georgia A.T. Club in 1961. By 1979, when she was elected to her first term on the Board, she was working closely with Forest Service representatives in her home state to establish a permanent route for the Trail. That year, she helped organize the first-ever work-

shop to teach maintainers more complex Trail-building techniques, such as waterbars. And, about the same time, she became one of the early supporters of the Benton MacKaye Trail Association, formed to build a loop trail connecting to the A.T. in its three southernmost states.

In 1996, after she stepped down as chair, Drummond became one of the few nonagency recipients of the Chief’s Award from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service, for her assistance in acquiring “especially difficult tracts along the Appalachian Trail. Without her help, it would have been extremely difficult....”

Drummond continues to be active in ATC and Board affairs as a chair emeritus and is on the board of the American Hiking Society.



Margaret Drummond (ATC Photo)



Dave Field (ATC Photo)

David B Field

Forty years, almost to the day, after David B. Field cut his first blow-down on the Appalachian Trail, he was elected ATC chair. He grew up in Phillips, Maine, and honed his love of hiking and the backwoods in the range of mountains closest to his front door: Saddleback. He was a teen-ager when, in 1955, he began maintaining a Saddleback Mountain section of A.T.—a volunteer assignment that continues to this day.

Field earned a forestry degree from the University of Maine and a doctorate at Yale University. He taught at the Yale forestry school before moving back to Maine and beginning a career at the University of Maine, where he still teaches forestry and is chairman of the department.

A former president of the Maine A.T. Club (for ten years), Field is considered the principal architect of the modern Maine section of the Trail. (More than half of the original A.T. there has been relocated, including many spots where it was taken off lowland tote roads and moved

to more difficult terrain along the ridges.) He has been a skillful negotiator with major landowners in Maine, among them the nation’s largest timber and paper companies, and the primary liaison between his club and state and federal agencies.

“At some point along the line, I made a conscious decision that, next to my work and my family, the Appalachian Trail was what I was going to do to make a difference in the world,” Field said in 1988 as he received a prestigious environmental award in Maine.

Even as he winds up his third and final term as ATC chair (it will end next summer), Field's impact on the Trail project is already legendary. He has been elected to ten consecutive terms on the Board, since 1979, serving in many capacities and on numerous committees. The organization and enthusiasm with which he approaches Board meetings and ATC issues is extraordinary. His stature and calm demeanor set a tone for success, whether he is at an informal meeting or at the bargaining table.

Field researches Trail issues carefully before venturing an opinion. Even in the matter of the longstanding efforts to secure a permanent Trail route and corridor over Saddleback Mountain, he continues to study new options, on paper and on site, scouring every nook and cranny of the mountain range he first began exploring as a child.

Over the years, Field has done a great deal to smooth the working relationships between ATC and its member clubs. The acquisition project and the delegation of management responsibility brought to the clubs and ATC a new, unfamiliar bureaucratic approach and, along with that, a myriad of meetings, paperwork, and standardization requirements. Field is keenly aware that the uniqueness of the Trail people, the geography, and the situations from Maine to Georgia require a skillful and compassionate approach. The one "constant focus of volunteer distaste, if not hatred, has been paperwork," he said.

When federal budget cutbacks have threatened the acquisition project, he has maintained "the surest guarantor of the future of the Appalachian Trail project is the dedication of volunteer Trail workers." That source of productive energy, he added, is independent of public budget fluctuations.

Among his numerous contributions to the Trail, his columns in *ATN* will undoubtedly be savored by generations to come. Most are written in the style approaching a personal journal of a hiker and maintainer waxing philosophical about the Trail or wilderness issues. When exploring sensitive areas, such as Trail overuse, he always poses thoughtful questions and invites feedback.

One of his 1996 columns, "Loving the Trail to Death," created such a range of discussion that its title became the theme for the biennial ATC meeting a year later. In a later column, revisiting that topic, he wrote, "The future of the tread is one of the most important challenges facing the Appalachian Trail community as we enter the new century. The trick will be finding the best balance between inadequate care and complete taming."

No column sparked so much debate as "The Social Trail," in 1998, in which he wrote of the "dilemma" of safeguard-

ing the Trail and educating its users, but not overdoing it with the presence of too many ridgerunners and campsite caretakers. The issue demands that "[we] need to weigh all factors in deciding where/when to have presence on the Trail," he wrote in a subsequent column.

When he's not tackling the controversial subjects, "to elicit policy guidance" for himself and the Board, Field's columns often are poetic musings about familiar Trail values and experiences. One is drawn into the solitude of the woods—"when everything combines to make that spot on the Trail where you are one of the most exquisitely beautiful places on Earth"—and realizes that it is here that Field recharges his batteries. His imagery warms the most skeptical of readers who, perhaps, yearn for a similar experience.

"Sunlight glistens from snow-capped fir tops and icy ash boughs," he wrote, sitting in the shelter of a copse during a

November hike on Saddleback Junior. "Crystal ice palaces burst from humble mud. Crimson mountain-ash berries burn against snow, evergreen, and sky. The air is still and crisp...."

Six months later, he shares his impatience with winter's hold: "Images of the warmth and smells and beauty of May and June are almost too much to bear, with the certain knowledge of the ice, snow, and

mud yet to come."

In "A Sense of Wonder," he poignantly pays tribute to the mistress and muse he continues to serve: "So long as humans can marvel at a ray of sun through a misty tree crown, so long as tears flow when a bird song releases a deep memory, so long as a biting wind across a bare mountain summit exhilarates life, the Appalachian Trail will still bring a sense of wonder."

Field has written nostalgically of old Trail-maintaining tools, thoughtfully about timber-management alternatives, with alarm about the proliferation of communications towers on mountain ridges, and with foresight about the debate over commercial use of the Trail. "At the dawn of the 22nd century," he predicted, "humans will wonder at how some communities could have allowed themselves to become so spiritually and economically impoverished as to not have an Appalachian Trail."

A club colleague once said about Field: "The Trail is his lifeblood, and the way he gets fired up about it rubs off on other people."

In the end, Field sees both the forest and the trees. For him, "The sight of hard-working volunteers remains one of the most inspiring of all the views from the Trail."



Saddleback Mountain—A priority for Field in his native Maine, and one of the last remaining unprotected sections of the A.T. (ATC Photo)



Where Now?

Survey of Board Members Highlights Protection Education as Priorities for Next Decade

By Robert A. Rubin

When ATC's centennial rolls around in 2025, what challenges will the Trail be facing? Of course, there's no way of knowing the specific problems and opportunities that the future will bring, but some obvious questions come to mind: Will the "viewshed" have been protected? Will air pollution and overuse continue to threaten the primitive experience of hiking the A.T.? What will the Conference's role in all this be? With those questions in mind, *Appalachian Trailway News* surveyed members of the Board of Managers at their April meeting, asking them for their off-the-cuff reactions to the question of what the next decade would bring.

Land Acquisition—By far, most often mentioned by Board members was the issue of acquiring land to protect the Trail itself and the experience of hiking it. Most members mentioned wrapping up acquisition of the Trail corridor, begun with passage of the federal trails act in 1968 and now ninety-nine percent complete. Specifics included:

- Saddleback Mountain—Resolving the impasse over Maine's Saddleback Mountain was mentioned specifically on about half the surveys.
- "Viewshed" protection—Acquiring lands in areas outside the immediate Trail corridor that are vital to the view from the footpath, as part of the A.T.'s primitive experience.
- Supporting the ATC Land Trust—Working to acquire land and conservation easements in areas where public ownership is not feasible.
- Fighting urban sprawl—Connected to the viewshed issue, but specifically the proliferation of suburban development, second homes, and telecommunications towers near the Trail.

Education—As ATC's role in the process of acquiring land

for the Trail itself diminishes with completion of the corridor, several members stressed the Conference's role as a source of education and information about the Appalachian high country. Specifics included:

- Education programs—Several members suggested developing a formal educational program on issues of wilderness stewardship and primitive values.
- Transition from "maintenance and protection orientation" to an "outreach orientation."
- Emphasis on group-size issues, low-impact camping, and Leave No Trace practices.
- Exhibits, visitor centers, and educational programs.

Management—ATC's management role will continue to be important in the coming decade, and several members stressed the need for what one termed "staying the course of maintaining the A.T. for the primitive experience as outside pressures continue to mount." Specific management issues mentioned included:

- Revising the ATC's comprehensive management plan.
- Wildlife habitat and water-quality concerns.
- Working cooperatively with state and federal agency partners.
- Controlling overuse of the Trail, "particularly at designated overnight sites."
- Promoting accessibility for disabled Trail users, where possible, and trying to understand what such users need.
- Establishing policies on commercial use of the Trail.

Internal ATC Issues—With nearly forty-five year-round employees and a budget in the millions of dollars annually, internal-management issues were also on the Board's to-do list for the coming decade. Specific points mentioned included:

- Long-term headquarters space and staffing—With the Harpers Ferry office bursting at the seams with staff and no room for expansion on the premises, several members mentioned the need to resolve those problems.
- Completing an ongoing long-range planning process.
- Establishing a capital campaign and increasing the Conference's financial security.
- Managing the growth of staff and services.

Membership—ATC's membership is now more than 32,000, but it was on the minds of several Board members, who mentioned:

- Increasing membership and planning for growth.
- Using technology more efficiently to communicate with members.
- Fostering the growth and development of ATC's volunteer tradition.
- Adapting to demographic changes as ATC maintains and enhances its body of active volunteers.
- Addressing the lack of racial and ethnic diversity among A.T. hikers, clubs, and the Conference itself.



Trail Work

By Mike Dawson



A Trail-builder Reflects on the State of the Art after 75 Years.

When ATC published the second modern edition of its manual on trail-building, *Appalachian Trail Design, Construction, and Maintenance*, during the same year the Conference was celebrating its seventy-fifth anniversary, I found myself pondering the changes in the way we've done our work on the footpath over the years. Not only has it changed since the Trail was originally conceived in the early 1920s, it has changed over the twenty years that I have worked for ATC.

Consider these instructions from Judge Arthur Perkins to Myron Avery, written in 1928 when PATC was marking its first sections of Trail in northern Virginia:

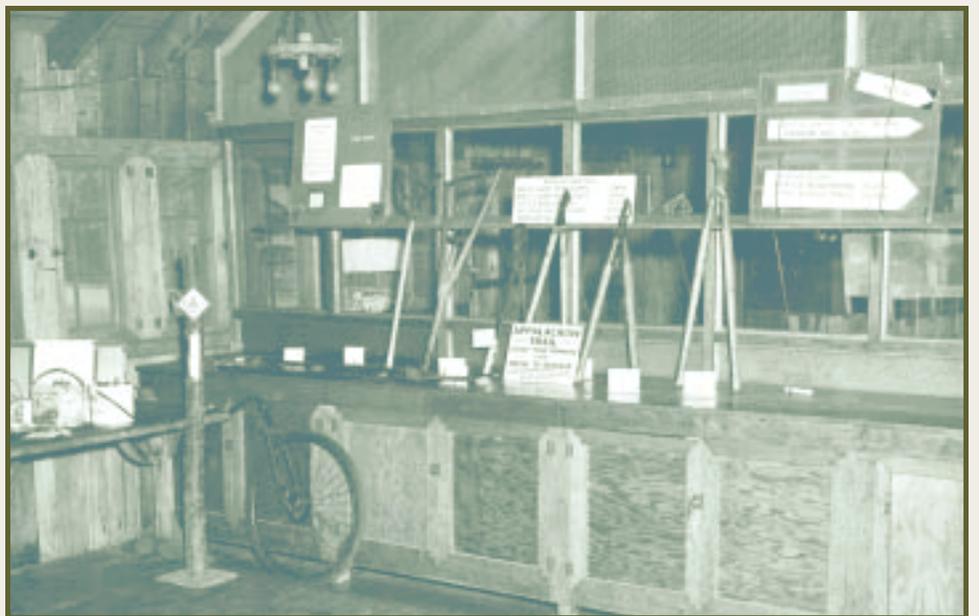
"This Trail is to be a 'Sky-line Trail' as far as practicable," Perkins wrote, "but judgment must be used as to this characteristic in locating it. As it is to be a through trail to be used by long-distance hikers, under pack, the combination of grade and footing must be considered. No step should be more than twelve to fourteen inches high, and it should never be necessary to plant the foot at an excessively steep angle.... On a steep slope, it should not go straight up, but in a diagonal direction, making a zig-zag trail if necessary...."

There is a good reason that ATC clubs were able to initially complete the entire trail in the sixteen years between MacKaye's seminal 1921 article and 1937, when Avery declared it complete. Much of the footpath was located on existing trails and woods

roads or simply located by blazing and clearing the most direct routes to connect existing paths. Aside from the major trail-building projects undertaken by the Civilian Conservation Corps in Maine, the Shenandoah National Park, and the Smokies, many of those early paths of least resistance were far from well-designed. They used logging roads and livestock routes from an era when environmental impact was not even considered. This was a far different time in the history of the Trail's use, with sparse population and few hikers on the Trail.

Even as use increased in the 1960s and 1970s, however, much of the treadway being built was still a trail of convenience, not to hikers but to Trail-builders. As recently as the late 1970s, extensive relocations included sections of overly steep Trail built to get the over-all route open fast, due to a lack of volunteer and agency resources.

This is easy enough to understand. Until about three decades ago, it simply didn't occur to maintainers to do much else. In *Appalachian Trail Conference Publication No. 1*, the original manual adopted by ATC in May 1931 and revised repeatedly until the 1960s, the concept of excavating a footpath tread is never mentioned. "The standard adopted for the Appa-



Trail tools, circa 1939—the basic implements are still the same (ATC Archives). Top of page: Crew in Maine, one packing a pistol, in the early 1930s. (ATC Archives)

lachian Trail is a trail cleared, marked and signed,” according to ATC’s guidelines. But, with the increase in hiker use of the A.T., it became clear to clubs and agencies alike that sections of the Trail at steep grades, built without proper drainage, were coming apart at the seams. Increasing foot traffic, combined with natural forces, was causing unacceptable levels of erosion and sedimentation, and the footpath was quickly becoming an impassable ditch in many locations. Descents from mountains were often at grades of forty, sixty, and even one hundred percent.

In 1979, the Board of Managers adopted the following updated standard for the tread: “The Appalachian Trail shall be provided with a treadway that is reasonably safe and enjoyable for hiking. The treadway shall be designed, constructed, and maintained so as to minimize its impact on the natural resources of the Trail and its surroundings.” Early in the 1980s, as the federal government and ATC worked to acquire a permanent Trail corridor, ATC, in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, designed a set of working methods for ensuring that we were protecting a location for the A.T. that represented its best possible location. This led Trail-builders to apply standards for Trail design that would help protect the ecosystems where it is located.

Today, the Trail is generally laid out at an eight to ten percent grade, with short stretches up to twenty percent. In locations where steep grades are necessary, the surface is stabilized and hardened—reinforced and drained by using rock and log structures, such as steps, cribs, and water-diversion devices. The result is a treadway that is stable in the long term and will blend into its natural surroundings, becoming less of a distraction from the natural environments that hikers come to experience.

One of the most significant changes in Trail construction since the early days of the Trail is the use of “sidehill construction” to provide a stable, relatively flat treadway at a good grade while ascending steep slopes. In the days when Myron Avery and others were first laying out the Trail, often it climbed straight up a ridgeline and ran as a “skyline” trail along the top of the ridge. But, in many sections, sidehill construction that runs along the flank of the mountain, often switching back and forth in the “zig-zag” fashion that Judge Perkins described, provides a more stable treadway and often improved views. This is especially true in the southern and mid-Atlantic regions, where many ridgetops are covered with trees and would otherwise offer what hikers often refer to as “pointless ups and downs” with hard climbing and few views. Sidehill excavation is the staple work of Trail crews and clubs in replacing steep, eroded trail with

stable, graded tread. Such trail sections provide not only protection to soils, but also a more pleasant hiking experience.

One of the biggest things that has not changed in Trail construction during ATC’s seventy-five years is how the bulk of the work gets done—by volunteers with hand tools. While the availability of lightweight chainsaws, “weed-eaters,” and the occasional gas-powered rock drill has made some construction jobs easier, ninety-nine percent of the work is done with the same hand tools used in the early days of the Trail—axes, hand saws, loppers, mattocks, and pulaskis, all mentioned in that 1931 manual. I firmly believe that this is part of the lure of Trail work: a job that can only be accomplished in its highest form by the care and labor of individuals working as a team with their hands.

The 1931 manual is just twenty pages long and provided state-of-the-art information to Trail volunteers at a time when all were learning through experience. An additional sixty-nine years of Trail work by tens of thousands of volunteers has provided the wisdom captured in 229 pages of our latest design,



Today’s Trail-builders employ “hardening” techniques, such as bog bridges, to avoid trampling sensitive areas. (ATC Photo)

construction, and maintenance manual. The manual, available from ATC’s Ultimate Trail Store, is a great introduction for new volunteers and contains a wealth of new ideas and reference material for old Trail hands.

Finally, there is no substitute for down-in-the-dirt, one-on-one practical experience to learn good Trail-building skills. ATC clubs, regional workshops, and volunteer crew programs all provide that opportunity for anyone who’s interested. For additional information, contact ATC’s regional office nearest you or our Harpers Ferry office.

Mike Dawson is ATC regional representative for central and southwest Virginia.



Trail Notes



Along the Trail Over Eight Decades



Above: Sign encountered by early Trail scouts. (ATC Archives)
Top: Starting the day at ATC's 1939 conference at Chimney Pond in Maine. (ATC Archives)

1929 • An Early Trail Scout in North Carolina

Departed Max Patch at 7:00 a.m. Found a fairly good trail going S. along the main divide, which we marked and blazed. This Trail turns to right from Highway, 1/4 mile S. of Hotel. Continued to Brown's Gap, 3 1/2 mi., where we found a family living. Water and food could be had here. And an old mountain wagon-road crosses the trail at this point. From this Gap we continued Southward along the crest to the Ridge to Deep Gap. This region had been partly logged over but the profusion of wild-flowers made the trip well worth while. I have never seen so many Yellow Fringed Orchids as we discovered in this short section. Literally hundreds of specimens were seen within a mile or so. A good trail leads along this ridge for about 4 mi. to Deep Gap. Near the latter end of this ridge the Trail drops off sharply on the Tennessee side of the Ridge, and one will think he is off the route. Water is found about 1/4 mi. from the

crest, and just beyond this point an old road is found that leads back to the ridge. Farms here will supply food and shelter in emergency. We inquired here closely as to the Snow Bird Mts. and found that no out-look could be had from their crests as they're densely forested. The route over them to Waterville would require at least 6 hrs. of hard travel with no trail for a great part of the distance, so we routed the trail down Ground Hog Creek from Deep Gap to the mouth of the stream on the Big Pigeon River, where one can either ride the motor-cars on the Phoenix Power Co., or have a good trail into Waterville. This will enable one to view the stupendous Pigeon River Gorge where the stream has cut its channel hundreds of feet deep in the walls of the mountains. This gorge should not be missed by any means as it approaches any in the East for rugged grandeur and charm. At Waterville, a tiny Power Company village, supplies may be had for a trip into the actual Great Smokies which terminate at this point. Avoid Snowbird Mts., by all means, unless you're primarily interested in botany and forestry, as the trees and brush are all one can see!

R.R. Ozmer of the Smoky Mountain Hiking Club, August 23, 1929, report to Myron Avery



President Franklin D. Roosevelt visited this Civilian Conservation Corps camp in early summer, 1933, in the new Shenandoah National Park, where Skyline Drive was displacing the original A.T. but the CCC would go on to build a new A.T. in the park. (ATC Archives)

1939 • Beards on the Trail

The oft-mooted question, "To shave or not to shave," is usually felt to be, after all, a matter of personal preference. Another aspect appears in a report received from Harold Pearn, president of the Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club.

On a recent trip over the Appalachian Trail from the James River to Rockfish Gap, he had opportunities to meet a number of the inhabitants of this region, about whom he says, "The people are some of the finest I ever came in contact with. The membership of the A.T. stand well with them. That shows that the ones that have hiked the Trail have left a good impression." But he was told they liked clean shaves instead of beards on hikers, as they "like to see a man's face."

Beards appear to be associated with tramps, not with trampers, and to raise doubt and suspicion.

Possibly, for the reputation of the hiking fraternity, a man on the Trail should shave even though he would prefer to take a vacation from that duty also.

January 1939, first issue of Appalachian Trailway News

1941 • Trail Closed Over Anthony's Nose

The first direct effect of war on The Appalachian Trail is contained in the following communication received by the Chairman of the Appalachian Trail Conference from the Manager of the Bear Mountain Bridge across the Hudson River in New York:

December 18, 1941

Dear Mr. Avery:

Your cooperation at the present critical time is requested, by the temporary closing of the Appalachian Trail or the relocation thereof, so that members will not during the present emergency use the route from the east end of the Bear Mountain Bridge over Anthony's Nose Mountain.

This request is made because of the importance of protecting the essential establishments in this immediate vicinity, the Navy Arsenal at Iona Island, the New York Central Railroad and the Bear Mountain Bridge and roadway leading to same.

The equipment carried by hikers, packs, picks, etc., can readily be used to conceal and place high explosives that could be so placed on the westward face of Anthony's Nose Mountain to precipitate large masses of rock onto the Railroad, Highway and Bridge anchorages. We are concerned about persons who may profess to be members of your association for the purpose of using the trail with evil intent. A notification by you or other heads of the Association of the closing addressed to all members would assist



Eiler Larsen, a noted "character" and hiker in the 1930s who corresponded with MacKaye and Avery. (ATC Archives)

in the prevention of use of the trail by non-members, and help apprehend imposters.

Prompt and favorable action is solicited.

Yours truly,

C.E. Floom

Bridge Manager

In keeping with this request, of course, the Trail route from the east end of the Bear Mountain Bridge to the Manitou Road on the east slope of Anthony's Nose has been declared closed. It is IMPERATIVE that there be no violation of this condition. Through hikers may detour this section by proceeding from the Bear Mountain Bridge to the railroad station of Manitou and taking the so-called dirt Manitou Road to where it crosses The Appalachian Trail,

east of Anthony's Nose.

Similar situations may be anticipated elsewhere. All Trail users should exhibit the utmost courtesy and cooperation if such conditions are encountered or any route difficulties experienced.

Appalachian Trailway News, January 1942

1948 • Continuous Trip Over Trail

Just as this issue goes to press, the following item appeared in the New York Times, August 6, 1948.

"Hikes Appalachian Trail

Man Who Left Georgia April 4

Tops Mount Katahdin in Maine

Millinocket, Maine, Aug. 5 (AP)—A 29-year-old York, Pa., man, Earl Shaffer, bestrode Mount Katahdin's mile-high summit today, the first hiker, he believes, to plod the Appala-



Murray Stevens, ATC chairman from 1952 to 1961, left, and Earl V. Shaffer, in the late 1940s or early 1950s. (ATC Archives)



chian Trail's entire 2,000-mile route. Arriving at the mountain's base last night, he said he left Oglethorpe, Ga., April 4 and averaged seventeen miles a day.

Sleeping in lean-tos and eating cornbread he cooked in a pan, the Pennsylvanian made his highlands hike in "light pack," food, spare clothing and a poncho. In addition to the rigors of the trail, Mr. Shaffer said he had encounters with a rattlesnake in Virginia and two copperheads in Pennsylvania.

Earl Shaffer is a Class D Member of the Conference. He bought all the guidebooks and other literature. Conference headquarters has no other information at present as to his trip. Further developments will be reported in the next issue.

• Fuel at Lean-Tos

APPALACHIAN TRAILWAY NEWS has in the past stressed problems resulting from the fuel situation at the lean-tos in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. National Park Service Regulations prohibit the cutting of trees for fuel or the use of vegetation, ferns, *etc.*, for bedding. Originally fuel was brought in to some of the lean-tos. Excessive use, bonfires, *etc.*, made impossible the continuance of this practice. The deadwood available in the vicinity of the lean-tos has become entirely exhausted. The problem is intensified by the difficulty of making fire during the torrential rains which are often experienced in the Great Smokies.

By reason of the difficulties which will be experienced in relying on wood for cooking, all hikers in the Great Smokes should carry primus stoves or other mechanical methods of cooking. Lightweight primus stoves are available. A very small compact light-weight stove, which uses ordinary gasoline, is the "Taykit," obtainable through Camp and Trail Outfitters, 112 Chambers Street, New York City. The weight of the primus stove is offset by the elimination of an axe and heavy cooking utensils. The availability of the stove saves time and makes available cooking facilities under the adverse conditions frequently experienced.

The above suggestion, which constitutes a departure from past practices, should be heeded by all Appalachian Trail travelers in the Great Smokies.

Appalachian Trailway News, September 1948

1950 • ATC at 25

As Judge John Barton Payne once remarked to a heckling senator who wanted to invade the Yellowstone National Park with power and flood control dams: "There's a heap more to living than three meals a day." The Appalachian Trail, itself, is a mere mark in the wilderness, a pretty long gash if you count all of its more than two thousand miles. But the trail would be nothing if it were not used. It is the human

beings on the trail who feel the inspiration of the wilderness and who formulate the philosophy which comes from contemplation and knowledge.

Probably each hiker uses his eyes to see something different. The geologist has special knowledge of the Earth's strata and composition, which gives him his peculiar insight; the geographer, if he hasn't wandered too far away from what we used to call "physical geography," observes his topography, notes the trails and highways traversing the valleys below, identifies little towns and far-away cities, and generally orients himself in the region. The botanist and the dendrologist, and even the garden clubber, must take delight in all that grows—trees, shrubs, flowers, ferns and ground cover, with their changing aspects through the seasons. The ornithologist immediately knows his birds. I don't know whether the weather man ever hikes, but if he does he must find a good chance to test out his own predictions and to note that an extremely local shower is just as wet for those on whom it falls as a general rain. Perhaps we all see something seen by these specialists. Most of us have profited by the guidance of the well-informed.

But, however, intellectual and full of knowledge the individual hiker may be, it seems to me that there is something even more important in the realm of spiritual experience, which may stem to some extent from nerve ease. I do not know how many of you feel the nervous tension of riding in crowded elevators in department stores or office buildings, with the halls and surging crowds at every floor. I do not know how many of you, caught in traffic jams, in the midst of tooting horns, careening buses and police whistles, feel stretched on the rack.

As for me, whether walking or resting beside the cool waters of a rippling mountain stream, whether looking out from the high rocks of a mountain peak mastered by hot exertion, or merely idling along a twisting trail through unexplored wilderness, I feel a delicious relaxation from nervous tension and a sense of oneness with the universe. I lose that resentment against so many other impinging human beings and feel at peace with humanity.

And, in all my mountain walks, I must recall a sunset which I can never forget. This is not the sunset we did not see in the Great Smokies, but a sunset in the Mogollons, where we had packed in to see the Gila Cliff Dwellings and enjoy the primitive forest. In the clear, dry air of the Southwest, the whole western sky from horizon to zenith was ablaze with a riot of color, reflected in opalescent hues even in the eastern skies. The beholder was lifted out of this sometimes dull world into a realm which granted glimpses of powers and forces beyond human concept, for, of course, the sun which caused all this tempestuous adventure, is quite a few miles from our little Earth, and I must say that, even when we are not reveling in major manifestations of glorious sunsets, we hikers seem to set some store by sunny, clear days for almost any little trip.

And so, not to attempt to evaluate too meticulously, the

every-day miracles of flowers and trees and good old soil and even rain, with the more remote miracles of sun (and shall I add moonlit camps?), I still say that the first Washington Conference on the Appalachian Trail, which gave us the beginning of a business organization and which created the Trail itself, also opened gates which are ordinarily closed to most civilized men and women and allowed our favored few to enter a New World—nay a New Universe. And for that let us all be grateful to Benton MacKaye, who first had the idea, and to the pioneers who first put the idea into action.

Harlean James, ATC secretary, 1925-41; Appalachian Trailway News, January 1950

1953 • An Early Thru-Hike

Thousands of pages would be required to describe the mountain views along the Appalachian Trail. From any one point there is not only one view but an unlimited number, depending on the weather, hour, season, and even the mood of the observer. From hour to hour, sun, clouds, wind, fog, and other factors change the picture so it is always different. No Trail walker would attempt to decide which view is the grandest and most enjoyable. In fact, sometimes, the supply of magnificent views exceeds the capacity to enjoy them.

But what I saw from the John B. Byrne Memorial Observation Tower on Wayah Bald, N.C., made a profound impression. It was a scene of valleys, mountains, streams, roads, white clouds on a background of clearest blue sky, golden and green forests, and a few glimpses of silvery rooftops—miles and miles of patches of sunshine and shadow; and the whole scene shifting to new patterns from moment to moment. Never again will those exact combinations be seen, but they will be replaced through the hours, days and years, by an infinite number of others no less glorious. Then multiply that view by hundreds of others along the entire 2,025 miles, all inspiring in different ways, and a part of the answer to the question, “Why walk the Appalachian Trail?” will be understood.

When I walked up Katahdin on the Trail, I could see only a few steps ahead, because of fog. Soon after I started down the same Trail, the fog lifted and for the first time I saw rough, rocky humps, sharp ridges, and frightful precipices. Had I come up over all that? No! How could I have? But I must have and would have to climb down the same way. Then I looked across the gulches and valleys of the landscape far away from Katahdin and saw the mirror surfaces of a hundred or more lakes in vast stretches of mountains. Not another scene like it elsewhere on the Trail or elsewhere on the Earth. So ended the Trail in beauty, grandeur, and perfection; just as every trail, including the trail of life, should end.

George Frederick Miller, Appalachian Trailway News, May 1953

1955 • Woman Walking the Trail



Grandma Gatewood (ATC Archives)

Several men have traversed the Trail from end to end in one continuous trip but as yet no woman has been reported as doing so.

Word has been received that Mrs. Emma Gatewood, a 67-year-old great-grandmother from Gallipolis, Ohio, started from Mt. Oglethorpe, Georgia, on May 3 and on August 16 arrived at Sherburne Pass, Vermont. She expects to continue on to Katahdin.

So it is possible that by the time this issue appears, the newspapers will carry the story that a woman has now made a continuous traverse of the Appalachian Trail, from Georgia to Maine.

Appalachian Trailway News, September 1955

1962 • Do Many Persons Walk Trails?

This question is constantly asked in connection with the matter of need for hiking trails and for lean-tos on the Appalachian Trail and other long trails.

Those who maintain trails are quite certain that many do, or else ghostly walkers beat down a footway, but as walking in the woods is one activity that is still unregistered, no one really knows how many persons walk woodland and mountainous trails.

An effort is being made to collect statistics as to walkers on the Appalachian Trail through installation of registers and collection of statistics created by the resulting (we hope) entries. Of course, hikers who do not register will not be included in the count on the Appalachian Trail, and all too often members of local clubs see no need of registering when they pass frequently along the Trail. Even if everyone does register, such count will only include those hikers on the Appalachian Trail. It will give no idea of the extent to which hiking, *i.e.*, walking on woodland and mountainous trails, has become popular. There will be nothing to show the extent



to which other trails are used.

Yet there is one potential source of information that has not been developed.

For some years, the Philadelphia Trail Club has had each of its members report to the secretary at the close of its official year the total number of miles each has hiked during the year ending then, not merely on club-sponsored trips or locally, but everywhere. The last report, for the year ending April 6, 1962, is interesting.

"The ground covered this year by our members amounted to 3,802.2 miles. The women did 1,698.2 miles and the men 2,104 miles.

The hiking was done by 49 women and 50 men, a total of 99 hikers, or about 48% of our membership."

If each club in the Appalachian Trail Conference, the New York–New Jersey Trail Conference, and the New England Trail Conference would collect such information from its members (counting a club holding membership in more than one Conference only once, of course), the tabulated results would be very helpful.

Such figures would cover only the hiking done by members of organized clubs affiliated with these Conferences and would not include the many independent groups or the numerous individual hikers. But, if a club with only approximately 200 members can report nearly 4,000 miles, think of the astronomical figures that may be expected from the Appalachian Mountain Club's more than 7,000 members or the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club's 900! Even without the clubs and groups not included in such Trail conferences, or the completely independent hikers, the result of such tabulation would probably surprise even the most optimistic estimator of today's hiking public.

Appalachian Trailway News, September 1962

Chasing Autumn

The Appalachian Trail has changed a lot in the 17 years since 1948. Three long relocations and many shorter ones have been completed, so that about one-third of the Trail route is new. The major changes came in North Carolina and Tennessee because of the Watauga Dam, in Virginia because of the Blue Ridge Parkway, and in Pennsylvania because of the Indiantown Gap Military Reservation. Fortunately, these new sections proved to be as good or even better than the ones they replaced. For instance, the traverse of the Pinnacles of Dan was lost in Virginia but the Dragon's Tooth was

gained. In North Carolina, the lofty Roan Mountain and, in Tennessee, the picturesque Laurel Fork Gorge were added. And Hawk Rock on Cove Mountain is the new attraction in Pennsylvania. Farther north, the most spectacular change is the relocation over Bemis and Remis Mountains in Maine, a rugged stretch that provides a fine view of several lakes. Other less fortunate changes have resulted from encroachment by government installations, commercial facilities, or housing developments. Most drastic of these was the shifting of the southern terminus from Mt. Oglethorpe to Springer Mountain in Georgia.



*On the Trail in the summer of 1968.
(ATC Archives)*

Another aspect of the Trail that has changed greatly is the shelter chain. Some old structures have been replaced and many new ones have been added. Maine probably has the greatest increase, with many log lean-tos added in recent years. The shelter-building program of the U.S. Forest Service is very evident, particularly in the southern forests. The most elaborate new shelters are the Byrd's Nests in Shenandoah National Park and similar stone shelters in the Great Smoky Park. But by far the fanciest installation along the A.T. is the Appalachian Mountain Club's Mizpah Springs Hut in New Hampshire, which is sometimes referred to as "The Hotel."

The most significant change in the Appalachian Trail since 1948, however, has been the improvement of the trailway. At that time, much of it was very rough, with thousands of down logs across it, and some areas so overgrown that finding the Trail was practically impossible. Marking often was faint or even totally lacking.

Now the marking is generally good and only a very few sections are cluttered with down timber or heavy brush. It is obvious that a lot of people have been working very hard on the Trail since 1948.

Earl V. Shaffer, Appalachian Trailway News, January 1966, after his second thru-hike.

1971 • Litter on the Appalachian Trail

The Appalachian Trail is clean, clean, clean! So say I after approximately 150 days of litter pickup on the Trail. Sixty times a day—150 days—9,000 times I bent down with a 40-pound pack to pick up some piece of litter. Calisthenics? You bet! Actually, though, where the A.T. is a foot trail only, it is remarkably clean. My 60 pieces of litter per day included 10 cans and 50 pieces of other litter, much of it burnable. I did not attempt to pick up litter on the 200 to 250 miles of Trail

that is on roads traversible by automobile. Neither did I attempt to pick up litter at impromptu camp sites where accumulations were beyond my five-gallon litterbag capacity. I frequently policed the trail-side shelters and burned what was burnable but carried out cans and bottles only when I knew I was approaching a spot where I could dispose of them.

Litter was heaviest in eastern Pennsylvania, in New Jersey, and around Bear Mountain Bridge in New York. It was lightest in New England in general and particularly in Maine. In fact, it was so clean in Maine that my daily log for September 29, eight days short of Katahdin, contains this entry under the item "Trash Pick Up": "Three pieces; am discontinuing litter pickup in Maine; TOO CLEAN!"

One the heaviest days, I picked up 150 to 170 pieces, and a couple of times in New Jersey and Pennsylvania I was about ready to give up the project. It required all my ingenuity just to figure out how and where I could dispose of the stuff. Those who like candy bars will be pleased to know that Baby Ruth is No. 1 among Trail hikers and Butterfinger a close second. For those of you who chew tobacco, it's a toss-up between Beechnut and Redman!

Edward Garvey, Appalachian Trailway News, May 1971

1976 • A Letter from the Appalachian Trail

To walk down the Blue Ridge; to be alone; to exert and strain up and down hills under a pack; to see the 'thin green slice' or the great eastern deciduous forests; to search for a consciousness unencumbered by front-page graffiti and the daily pressure of the city. Time and space to relax and tune to the rhythm and demands of the land.

September is a time of transition: the last days of summer, the best of summer, and the first golden-red days of fall.

September 13

We drive down the Blue Ridge heading for the spot where I will begin my walk. We stop and listen to a park ranger's slide-talk. He speaks of the great cycle; the land; the Indians and their gentle relationship with the land; the colonists; technology; the mountain people; more and advanced technology; the short-time takers; and the ripping, cutting and abuse of the land. He tells of a cycle that has come full turn. He tells of our need now to go to the wild places to replenish and rejuvenate our souls.

There must be more to this commentary. Doesn't this

very cycle tell us where America is developing a lasting man-land rapport? Our need to replenish the soul doesn't speak well for what our 'culture' does with us the rest of the time nor how we have learned to live with ourselves.

September 14

We wind across the Virginia countryside. The farms and the towns, changing little from year to year, reflect the climate and the soil. Experience has taught the lesson of taking too much and doing irreversible damage. Patience and care are the qualities required to live within the constraints of the land. Much of rural America has learned this hard lesson. What of industrial America, corporate America, or most remote of all, bureaucratic America? Do they feel the land's rhythm?



Why the acquisition program was needed: a northern Virginia Trail scene in the 1970s. (ATC Archives)

We meet the Appalachian Trail in Damascus, Virginia, a town of 1,500 situated at the terminus of three major mountain ridges with green-clad slopes all around and a brook running through.

September 15

My friend Tomi interprets the I Ching coins I cast, asking "How am I to approach this journey?" The reply: The Turning Point: going out and coming in without error: Turning away from the confusion of external things:

turning back to one's inner light. What can I say of this ancient Chinese oracle?

John Seidensticker, Appalachian Trailway News, September 1976

1988 • Dreams and Reality on the Appalachian Trail

Sarah mysteriously broke the femur in her left leg, not in a fall, but simply while walking along the rocky footpath near Burkes Garden. I was ahead on the Trail at the time of the accident, looking for a suitable campsite and potable water.

Suddenly, I found myself winding down a mountain road in an ambulance with my injured companion, now hopelessly crippled for the remainder of the summer. We hastily left the peaceful woods for the busy world at Tazewell Community Hospital, where X-rays confirmed our worst fears.

A broken leg is a trifling thing compared to a broken dream. A broken leg can be mended more easily than a broken spirit.

I spend agonizing hours alone, wrestling with my feelings about whether to continue on or to leave the Trail then

and there. It was perhaps the most difficult decision I have ever made. I was not sure that I could be happy with either choice, but a choice had to be made. Sarah urged me on. My mind said to go on, but my heart said to stay. I was to grapple with these feelings the remainder of my journey.

I continued on without Sarah, carrying the dreams we had nurtured together on my shoulders alone. And yet, 'though my wife now lay in a hospital bed far away, I felt her presence every moment that I was to continue. But, much of



The Sullivans pitching their tent near Davenport Gap on their 1987 thru-hike attempt. (ATC Archives)

the joy had gone out of the dream. It seemed that the very heart and soul of it had been taken away. My thoughts no longer belonged wholly to the mountains or to Sarah. For quite some time, I found myself divided between them, trying to occupy two spaces at the same time. I found that it could not be done. It was a kind of "Catch 22" that I found myself in.

I finally left the Trail at Great Barrington, Mass., after a rainy night alone in my tent. Katahdin will be there another summer. I left of my own free will and under my own power, difficult as it was to do.

Charles E. Sullivan, Appalachian Trailway News, September–October 1988

1992 • "Helmutt" on a Hound

Last November, I was hiking alone on a cool, breezy, and partly cloudy day in early November in the Bald Mountains along the North Carolina/Tennessee state line. It was during the later days of my southbound thru-hike, and my thoughts also revolved around my upcoming stop at the

small store at Allen Gap and the warm stove, junk food, and pleasant conversation I hoped it would provide.

I uttered a silent curse as I approached a discarded plastic jug alongside the Trail. As I drew closer, I realized it was no ordinary piece of litter. A female beagle was wearing the jug like a helmet, and it was stuck tightly over her entire head.

The disturbed leaves indicated a long-suffering, frightening, futile struggle. Her lack of movement as I approached made me question whether she had given up on her struggle and was lying still or perhaps was dead.

I was thrilled when she reacted to my concerned, almost frantic voice. She immediately renewed her efforts at tugging against the jug, to no avail. I pinned the jug between my knees and, finally, she was able to extract herself.

She burst out as if experiencing a rebirth. She excitedly, and with immense relief, rubbed her head through the leaves. She began thanking me with yaps and barks and bounding about like a puppy. I shuddered with emotion, contemplating her near-tragedy.

I told her to go home, but she wouldn't leave my side. She led me down the Trail for about two miles. Still a few miles north of Allen Gap, I reached a remote road and approached a home. An elderly, friendly couple agreed to take my

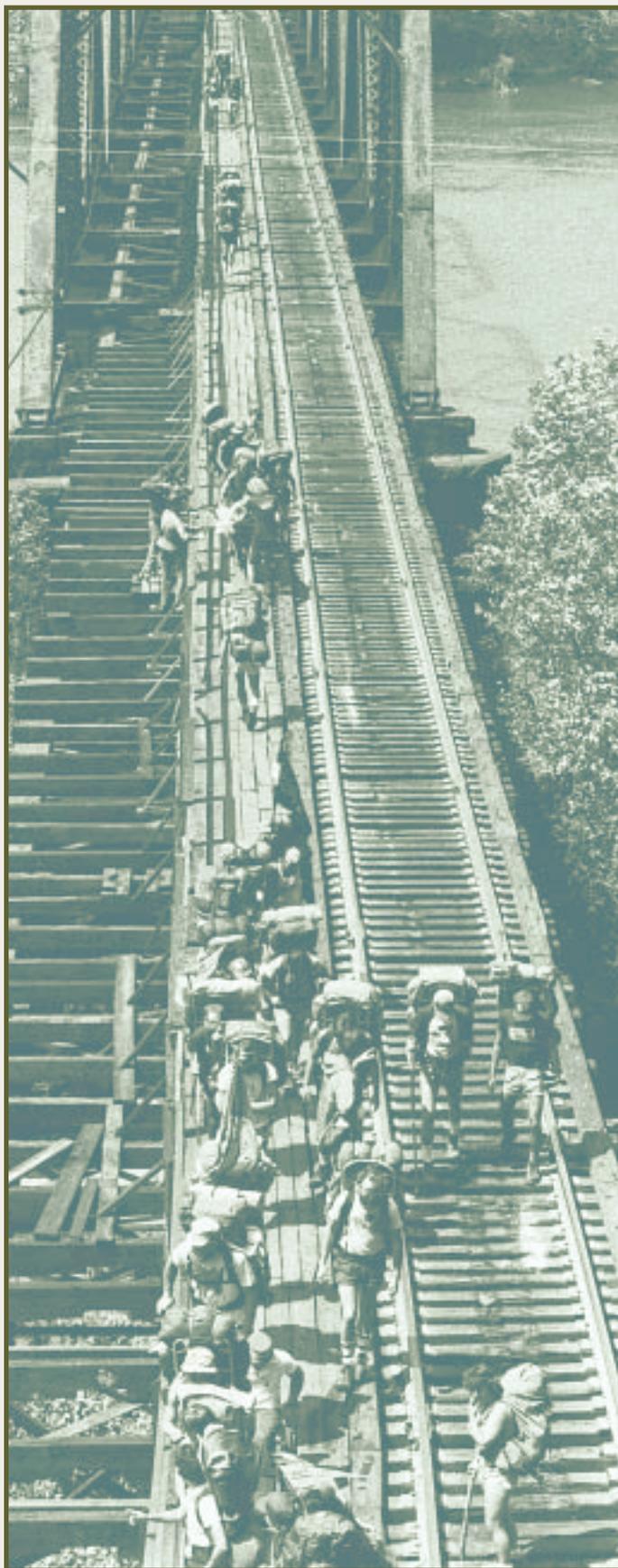
new friend and attempt to locate her owner, if one existed.

They placed her in a pen with their own dog. I thanked them and continued on my way. I'll never forget her pitiful crying as I walked away. Even today, I often wonder, should I have adopted my friend-for-life?

Chris Gore, Appalachian Trailway News, November–December 1992.



Tools of the trade (ATC Photo)



"Hike-a-Nation," an event that led to founding of the American Hiking Society, crosses the Potomac at Harpers Ferry in the early 1980s. (ATC Photo)

2000 • Thru-Hikers

Like just another berry
 they have a season
 usually sometime in mid-July
 depending of course on weather and rainfall

some years you can see them
 sitting on the bench in front of the Super Stop & Shop
 staring forlornly at the torrents of water
 breaking and spewing all over the pavement and the b&b
 tourists

You approach
 with a gallant compassion
 and offer to take them home
 trade their stories for a bigger hot water bill
 and a half a can of Ajax

They are from Georgia, Colorado, England
 and have strange and exotic trail names

Raven
 Clivis
 Too Obtuse
 Aquaholic
 Tattoo
 32 Flavors
 Desperado
 Nimble Nomad
 2 Showers
 Purple
 Psalm 37
 King of Spain
 Ma & Pa
 Lonestar
 Hikin Mike
 Constantly Hurt
 Setback & Relax
 Rhythm
 Forget-me-not
 Morpheus & Nightingale
 Houdini
 Click Click
 Serenity Now
 Insanity Later

They write in your guest book
 of bears and mud and shelters shared
 grateful for every extended hospitality

When winter comes you open letters
 a picture of a lean hiker atop Katahdin
 a smile broader than their hips
 they never forget you
 a stranger who saved them from the rain
 and on next year's Christmas card
 they are just married
 holding a newborn or a graduate degree
 a crop of healed blisters and healthy pride
 streaming forth toward computers and mortgages
 unafraid
 to unpave their own trails

Bernice Lewis, *Appalachian Trailway News*



Important Dates in Appalachian Trail Conference History

October 1921—“An Appalachian Trail: A Project in Regional Planning,” by Benton MacKaye appears in the *Journal of the American Institute of Architects*.

April 1922—Appalachian Trail Committee of Washington formed.

March 3, 1925—Appalachian Trail Conference established.

January 1927—Judge Arthur Perkins becomes acting ATC chairman, stimulates additional field work.

June 1931—Myron H. Avery elected to first of seven consecutive terms as ATC chairman.

August 14, 1937—Appalachian Trail completed as a continuous footpath.

October 2, 1968—National Trails System Act becomes law; A.T. becomes a national scenic trail under federal-state protection.

August 1972—ATC headquarters moved from Washington, D.C., to Harpers Ferry, W.Va.

March 21, 1978—“Appalachian Trail Amendments” to National Trails System Act signed into law.

January 26, 1984—National Park Service delegates to ATC the responsibility for managing A.T. corridor lands.

General Meetings of the Appalachian Trail Conference

1. March 2–3, 1925, Washington, D.C.
2. May 19–20, 1928, Washington, D.C.
3. May 10–11, 1929, Easton, Pa.
4. May 30–June 1, 1930, Skyland, Va.
5. June 12–14, 1931, Gatlinburg, Tenn.
6. June 30–July 2, 1934, Long Trail Lodge, Vt.
7. May 22–23, 1935, Skyland, Va.
8. June 26–28, 1937, Gatlinburg, Tenn.
9. Aug. 18–26, 1939, Daicey Pond, Katahdin, Maine
10. May 30–June 1, 1941, Bear Mountain State Park, N.Y.
11. June 26–28, 1948, Fontana Village, N.C.
12. May 30–June 1, 1952, Skyland, Va.
13. May 30–31, 1955, Mt. Moosilauke, N.H.
14. May 30–June 1, 1958, Mountain Lake, Va.
15. June 3–5, 1961, Delaware Water Gap, Pa.
16. June 27–29, 1964, Stratton Mountain, Vt.
17. May 20–22, 1967, Cashiers, N.C.
18. May 29–31, 1970, Shippensburg, Pa.
19. June 16–18, 1972, Plymouth, N.H.
20. June 21–23, 1975, Boone, N.C.
21. May 28–30, 1977, Shepherdstown, W.Va.
22. August 10–13, 1979, Carrabassett, Maine



Brackett House in Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, ATC offices from 1972 to 1976. (ATC Archives)

23. June 26–July 3, 1981, Cullowhee, N.C.
24. May 27–June 3, 1983, New Paltz, N.Y.
25. August 2–9, 1985, Poultney, Vt.
26. July 3–10, 1987, Lynchburg, Va.
27. June 16–23, 1989, East Stroudsburg, Pa.
28. July 19–26, 1991, Williamstown, Mass.
29. June 12–18, 1993, Dahlonega, Ga.
30. July 1–7, 1995, Harrisonburg, Va.
31. August 1–8, 1997, Bethel, Maine
32. July 9–16, 1999, Radford, Va.

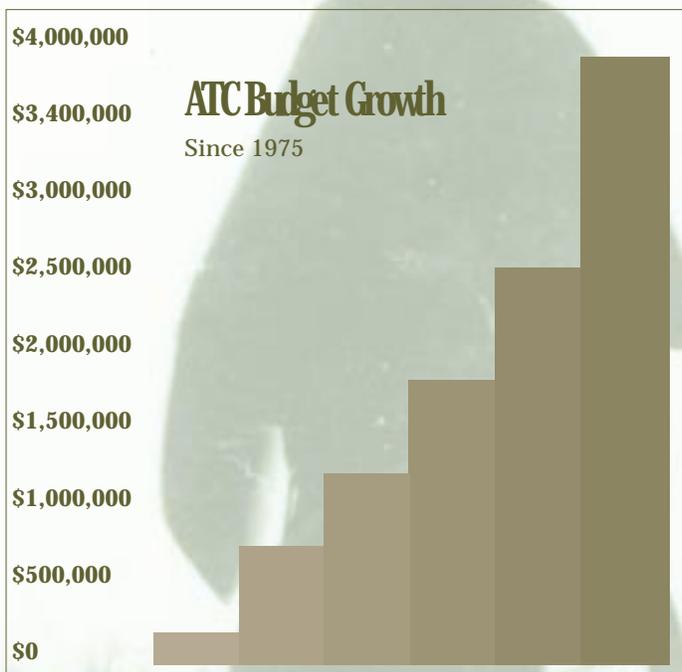
Appalachian Trail Conference Chairmen*

- William A. Welch (New York), 1925–1927
 Arthur Perkins (Connecticut), acting, 1927–1928; 1928–1930
 Myron H. Avery (Washington, D.C.), acting, 1930–1931;
 1931–1952
 Murray H. Stevens (New York), 1952–1961
 Stanley A. Murray (Tennessee), 1961–1975
 George M. Zoebelin (New York), 1975–1979
 Charles L. Pugh (Virginia), 1979–1980
 Ruth E. Blackburn (Maryland), 1980–1983
 Raymond F. Hunt (Tennessee), 1983–1989
 Margaret C. Drummond (Georgia), 1989–1995
 David B. Field (Maine), 1995–present

*The title of the presiding officer of the Conference was changed to “chair” in 1980.

Executive Directors

- Lester L. Holmes, 1968–1975
 Paul C. Pritchard, 1975–1977
 Henry W. Lautz, 1977–1980
 Laurence R. Van Meter, 1981–1986
 David N. Startzell, 1986–present

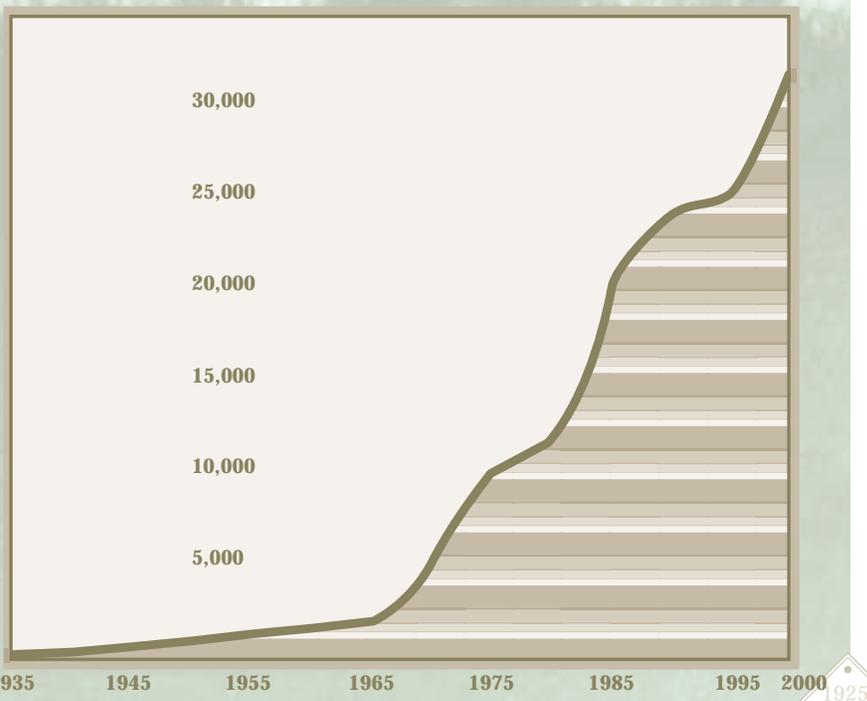


ATC Membership Growth

From 18 in 1930 to more than 32,000 today



Reese Lukei with the plaque marking the last section completed of the original A.T., between Spaulding and Sugarloaf summits in Maine—placed there 50 years later on August 14, 1987. (ATC Photo)



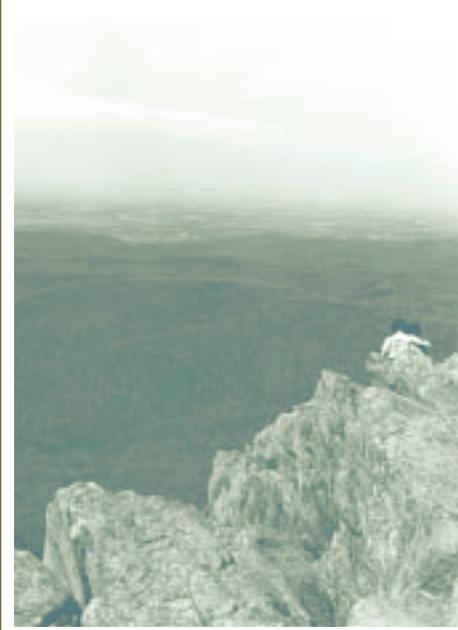
Trail Years . . .

The Era of Management and Promotion

Continued from page 16

The passage of the National Trails System Act marked the midpoint of the first significant period of growth for the Conference itself, with individual memberships—attracted by the battle to protect the Trail—growing from 300 early in Stan Murray’s tenure to approximately 10,000 by 1975. The meetings commitment of the Board of Managers likewise grew from thirty minutes after general Conference meetings every three years to two weekend-long meetings a year.

Passage of the act made it evident to the Board that the Conference could operate no longer solely as an organization of volunteers, no matter how dedicated and efficient they were. A third era for the organization, management of the Trail as a unit of the national park system with the aid of a professional staff, was beginning. ATC, for starters, would need an accountable presence in Wash-



ington to coordinate work with the National Park Service and Forest Service representatives and to reinforce overworked office volunteers.

So, the Board established the first ad-

ministrative staff position. Col. Lester L. Holmes, about to retire from the Army, was hired that October as part-time “administrative officer.” A year later, the job was expanded to full-time “executive secretary,” later changed to “executive director.” Gradually, as budget adjustments could be made, additional staff members would be hired to handle the Conference’s day-to-day operations while volunteers continued to maintain the Trail and to set policy through the Board and its committees.

Growth in Conference membership and activities went hand-in-hand with an increase in hiking and backpacking throughout the country. Growth in long-distance hiking was seen as a sign of growth in the Trail’s popularity. An estimated three to four million persons a year visited the Trail by the late 1970s, an estimate that has been used consistently since. The advent of lightweight backpacking equipment, periodicals such as *Backpacker*, publication of the Interior Department’s “Trails for America,” and a resurgence of appreciation by young people of nature and the outdoors led in the first half of the 1970s to a new threat

OFF THE TRAIL: THE FIFTIES

- North Korea invades South, and Harry Truman sends troops for the United Nations force (the same day, he sends thirty-five military advisors to a place called Vietnam). The U.N. troops make it to the northern border before 300,000 Chinese chase them back.
- Home-schooled Elizabeth Alexandra Mary becomes queen of the United Kingdom, and Gamal Abd-Al Nasser ends the monarchy in Egypt. Sir Edmund Hillary scales Mt. Everest. Stalin dies from a stroke.
- The Supreme Court holds segregated public schools unconstitutional, and an era of policy by litigation, rather than legislation, slowly begins. Rosa Parks refuses to give up her bus seat to a white Alabama man.
- The interstate highway system, another idea kicking around in Benton MacKaye’s head at one time, is authorized.
- The GI Bill has also meant suburbia and new concerns: babysitters, lawn-mowing, and commuting (increasingly by automobile, as trains, after two years under Army control, cut service). The number of Little League teams increases sevenfold; national-forest campers, fourfold; gin production, threefold. A car-dealer’s window professes to say it all: “Rock ‘n’ Roll, Sputnik, Flying Saucers and the Edsel.” Close, but not all. There are ducktails, Willie Mays, James Dean, quiz-show scandals, Hula Hoops, bomb shelters.
- The big swing bands wind down as rock-and-roll winds up—the Dorsey brothers’ big-band television show brings the world a truck driver named Elvis. Dick Clark becomes permanently 25. Barbie, the safety belt, Disneyland, and “Peanuts” make their debuts.
 - Jack Kerouac comes off the road with Beatniks, Alaska and Hawaii make it in the union, the Dalai Lama is exiled from Tibet, and Edward R. Murrow goes off the air in a huff and a puff, and Castro rides triumphant into Havana.



to the Trail that seemed to come from its users—or, more precisely, overusers. Much of the footpath had not been located, designed, or “constructed” with the thought of so many boots hitting the tread so often (see article, page 40).

During this period, Conference resources were rechanneled into informational and educational programs aimed at hikers, backpackers, and neighboring landowners—to develop a “Trail ethic” that would help alleviate damage to the natural surroundings. Still, in places, heavy Trail use had hurt “neighbor relations” along the footpath, and lands were being closed off. Commercial developers

were aggressively seeking out neighboring farms and forests in the inflationary, speculative land-buying spirit of the decade, too. The Trail was forced back onto roads in many places.

Meanwhile, both the Conference and the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, its landlord in a shared Washington, D.C., townhouse, were growing in membership, activities, and responsibilities. So, in August 1972, the Conference moved up the Potomac River to Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, about a mile and a half from the Trail at that time (The A.T. was moved to within a quarter mile in 1986). The small staff worked out of the Brackett

House, a government-owned building on Camp Hill in Harpers Ferry National Historical Park.

Less than two years after the 1968 act’s passage, the two lead federal agencies took the first public steps to implement it with new cooperative agreements between or among the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, and the Appalachian Trail Conference. Agreements between NPS and ten of the fourteen Trail states, encouraging them to acquire and manage corridor lands outside federal park and forest areas, were signed between 1971 and 1975.

The preliminary “official” A.T.

Public Law 90-543—National Trails System Act

This key statute provided for a national system of trails, specifically designating two. It designated the Appalachian Trail as the first “national scenic trail”—first alphabetically and because it was the only completed, marked footpath of those under consideration. The Pacific Crest Trail, to run through California, Oregon, and Washington, was also designated.

The National Park Service, through the secretary of the interior, was given principal administrative responsibility for the A.T., in consultation with the U.S. Forest Service, through the secretary of agriculture. (The roles of the agencies were reversed for the Pacific Crest Trail.) The law directed the Interior Department to establish the permanent route and publish it with maps and descriptions, an act that would trigger a provision giving states and localities along the Trail two years in which to

acquire the privately owned corridor lands in their jurisdictions.

After that two-year period, the park service was authorized to take whatever action was necessary to preserve and protect the Trail—through cooperative

agreements, scenic and other protective easements, land acquisitions and exchanges, or accepting land donations.

One of the most significant other provisions of the act for the Conference, beyond the authorizations to acquire the land for the public, was Section 7(h), which authorized formal agreements between the

Interior Department and nonfederal entities to “operate, develop, and maintain” the Appalachian Trail.



President Lyndon B. Johnson at signing ceremony for the National Trails System Act, 1968. (ATC Archives)



The Era of Management and Promotion...



ATC "2,000-milers" gather in the 1970s. Earl Shaffer, Ed Garvey, and Grandma Gatewood are front and center. (ATC Archives)

route—derived from aerial photographs of volunteers holding white placards—was published in February 1971 and approved in final form that October, triggering the two-year period of state and local preference in the acquisition process under the trails system act. (See box, page 53.)

The Forest Service, with hundreds of miles of Trail through eight national forests, concentrated its acquisition program on private tracts for the A.T. within the forest boundaries in those early years of the protection program. It acquired large tracts whenever possible, rather than just a linear corridor. The Park Service moved more slowly: It would be January 1979—with a property in New York—before the Interior Department purchased a single easement or a single acre for the Trail corridor.

Land Acquisition Begins

Despite the assurances of the 1968 act, some Conference members worried that the relatively narrow corridor authorized by law would not give sufficient protection to the "wilderness" environment around the Trail. Murray, spurred by those concerns, proposed in 1971–72 a relatively broad "greenway" along the Trail in which the character of the land and the lifestyles of its residents would be preserved. The Board of Managers subsequently resolved "to seek the establishment of an Appalachian Greenway encompassing the Appalachian Trail and of sufficient width to provide a nationally significant zone for dispersed types of recreation, wildlife habitat, scientific study, and timber and watershed management, as well as to provide vicarious benefits to the American people."

This greenway concept envisioned a primitive or wilderness zone acquired by purchases or easements and embracing the footpath, with a surrounding rural or countryside zone of up to ten miles out from the primitive zone. The countryside zone would consist of largely private property preserved through land-use planning. ATC went so far as to trademark the term, Appalachian Greenway, soon after it trademarked the classic A.T. diamond as its organizational logo in 1974.

A consultant's study on the greenway concept was given special attention in June 1975, when a record 1,100 persons or more marked the Conference's meeting at Boone, North Carolina, in its golden-anniversary year as an organization. It remained a long-range goal, but current events were forcing the conference to concentrate on something more immediate: lack of National Park Service

progress in acquiring lands for the narrow corridor already authorized by law.

At the Boone meeting, Stan Murray stepped down as chairman, and George M. Zoebelien of New York City was elected to succeed him. The new chairman, an accountant, emphasized fiscal management and other organizational matters—"getting our house in order"—as the membership continued to grow and the need for long-range planning became clear. Shortly thereafter, Executive Director Lester Holmes, who in 1970 had become the Conference's first life member, announced his retirement (though he remained active in the archives and relocations-recording areas until his death in 1984). Paul C. Pritchard, a political-policy professional from Georgia, was recruited to succeed him in 1975.

Near the end of 1975, on December 11, Benton MacKaye died in his sleep at Shirley Center, three months short of his

97th birthday.

The following year, the Conference moved its headquarters a few blocks away on Camp Hill to its present location (see box, page 57). Also in 1976, the Conference secured an A.W. Mellon Foundation grant to fund a special workshop on the Appalachian Greenway concept, the pur-

the greenway proposal lapsed.

About this time, the Trail's friends in Congress, alerted by reports from Conference members, especially such vocal advocates as 1970 thru-hiker Edward B. Garvey of PATC and the Board, began to express concern over both the rapidly growing threats to the footpath and the slow pace of governmental land acquisition to protect it. The federal agencies and Conference officials were called to testify at congressional oversight hearings on implementation of the 1968 National Trails System Act. The Forest Service reported that it had added 117 miles of protected Trail within its boundaries. The National Park Service had made no significant progress, aside



suit of which was being transferred from ATC to the Appalachian Highlands Association. After a series of resignations and vacancies, however, active work on

from an A.T. Project Office quickly formed in the North Atlantic regional office in Boston in March 1976, after Garvey successfully offered a critical resolution

OFF THE TRAIL: THE SIXTIES

- "Let us begin anew," says John F. Kennedy, a severe critic in 1954 of U.S. involvement in Vietnam, like his vice president, Lyndon Johnson. American forces rise from 500 under Eisenhower to 543,400 under Nixon. The Berlin Wall goes up, Stalin's corpse goes out of sight, and the Bay of Pigs invaders go down.
- Love-ins and 35 acres of middle-class renegades wallowing at Woodstock. More painfully, sit-ins and read-ins and sleep-ins and wade-ins and bus-ins for black dignity. Communes and light shows, the Beatles and Jimi Hendrix and the Rolling Stones, on-stage nudity and Hare Krishnas before they found the airport, fashion as a Twiggy joke and the advent of both retirement villages and the "singles only" subculture. *Cosmopolitan* takes off like a rocket.
- Marshall McLuhan proclaims a tribal, verbal "global village," and Rachel Carson, with Interior on her résumé, produces *Silent Spring*. Three scientists decipher the genetic code, and lasers are built to cut metal.
- "Information retrieval" enters the lexicon, computerized matchmaking comes into its own, and The Feminine Mystique revives feminism after four decades' dormancy. At decade's end, for reasons of military research communications, university experts exchange a two-letter long-distance message between computers. The Internet is born, as are Diana Spencer and Medicare.
- Israel sentences Adolf Eichman to death, Marilyn overdoses, and Ernest Hemingway carries on the family tradition with a shotgun to his head. Winston Churchill and Walt Disney die, and Rudolf Nureyev and Margot Fontaine provide a glimpse of heaven on a London stage. Martin Luther King has a dream. Bill Russell has the Celtics. Along comes Tet, and LBJ walks away.
- Walking—behind riderless Black Jack and the caisson to Arlington, behind the cart to the funeral service at Ebenezer Baptist Church, behind a hearse up that same Arlington hill with the flame one hot Saturday in June. Walking—across a bridge in Selma, Alabama, onto the Pentagon grounds to put daisies down rifle barrels, into the nightsticks of Mayor Daley's Chicago, and on to war at a cost of \$2.85 million every hour. Walking—on the moon. Walking—into Pacific jungles with the Peace Corps.
- Campuses are under siege, sports salaries start to soar, and revolutions resume—the green revolution, the Vatican II revolution, the War on Poverty, one man/one vote, and Mao's Cultural Revolution. Ho Chi Minh is dead, the Concorde is in the air, the Mustang is on the road, warning labels are on cigarette packs, and four-way peace talks begin over Vietnam.

The Era of Management and Promotion...

at Boone meeting. That office worked on better relationships with Forest Service field-level officials but continued to resist land purchases as the best approach to protecting the Trail.

Nor was the Park Service the only management partner to move slowly. Several states had portions of the Trail protected within state lands prior to the statute, but only Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Virginia had noticeably responded to the federal statute's encouragement.

In 1977, Interior's passivity evaporated. At the biennial meeting at Shepherdstown, West Virginia, a dozen miles from the new ATC headquarters, keynote speaker Robert L. Herbst, recently appointed assistant secretary for fish, wildlife, and parks, in the strongest of terms promised renewed federal vigor in protecting the A.T.

The Park Service and ATC were soon at work drafting amendments to the 1968 act they thought necessary to achieve perma-

nent security for the resources. ATC volunteers embarked on a crash program to choose a preferred route and corridor and to supply the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the affected landowners. During this period, Executive Director Pritchard was appointed assistant director of the Interior Department's Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, and Henry W. Lautz was promoted to the top Conference staff position.



Benton MacKaye at 96. (ATC Archives)

The Appalachian Trail Bill

In October 1977, the U.S. House of Representatives adopted amendments to the 1968 statute that came to be known as "the Appalachian Trail Bill." The Senate enlarged its scope the following February, and the House accepted the changes. The bill authorized funds to acquire Trail land and explicitly recognized the active role of ATC volunteers, instructing the agencies to maintain their close working

OFF THE TRAIL: THE SEVENTIES

- Grain shortages and "El Nino" send food prices into double-digit inflation. The keepers of Arab oil send fuel prices to join them and Americans into lines for gasoline and building eight hundred miles of Alaska pipeline. Recession, monetary instability, and the global economy get a head start on the global village.
- The Post Office goes independent, the voting age goes to 18, and the Dow Jones average goes above 1,000. President Nixon bolsters food stamps, ends the draft, goes to Beijing, goes to Moscow to revive detente, and goes away in a helicopter one hot August noon. The media adopts -gate as a suffix.
- President Ford brings relief, but with a pardon attached. President Carter ushers him out, pardons the draft evaders, and tosses out detente when the Soviets invade Afghanistan. Secretary Kissinger moves to Trailside in Connecticut.
- The decade opens with the first Earth Day and closes with Three Mile Island. Students are killed in protests at Kent State, the United States promotes the first two women to general rank, South Vietnam surrenders as the last Americans helicopter out, and Franco and de Gaulle and Mao die. The Ayatollah Khomeini overthrows the shah, and his students eventually seize fifty-three hostages at the U.S. embassy in Tehran, provoking the advent of "Nightline" and the end of the Carter presidency.
- "Love Story," coed dorms, "All in the Family," waterbeds, Attica, Dolly Parton, "Roots," the World Trade Center towers visible from the Trail, pet rocks, King Tut's stuff on tour, *Roe v. Wade*, the Bicentennial, "Star Wars," "Sesame Street," the first test-tube baby, 913 fanatics dead from toxic grape juice at Jonestown, Guyana, and eleven Olympic athletes mowed down in Munich.
- Mother Elizabeth Seton becomes the first American-born saint of the Catholic church; war-free Mother Teresa is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Louis Armstrong, Igor Stravinsky, Coco Chanel, and Elvis all leave the building.
- Did someone say "disco"? Shame on your bell-bottoms.



partnerships with volunteer-based organizations involved with the Trail. President Jimmy Carter signed the legislation into law on March 21, 1978.

At the time the amendments were enacted, slightly fewer than 1,250 Trail miles, about fifty-nine percent of the official route, were on public property: 775 miles had been protected by the U.S. Forest Service, 261.4 miles by states, and 213.5 miles by the National Park Service (primarily sections in the Great Smoky Mountains and Shenandoah parks). The central thrust of those key amendments was an acceleration of the Interior Department's land-acquisition program.

Congress decided to authorize \$90 million for that purpose (with a portion to be actually appropriated each year) and expanded the Interior protection program's eminent-domain authority to an average of 125 surrounding acres per mile of Trail, five times the maximum allowed by the original act. That \$90 million is equal to \$235 million today, less than the agencies have actually spent in acquiring ninety-nine percent of the designated lands.

The National Park Service that fall shifted its A.T. Project Office to Harpers Ferry, three blocks from ATC offices. David A. Richie, the deputy regional di-

rector in Boston who had staffed it there, was named manager. The agency also established a land-acquisition headquarters twenty miles away in Martinsburg, West Virginia. Its agency-wide land-acquisition chief, Charles R. Rinaldi, took over as director of this effort, which became the most complicated one in the service's history. Land-acquisition field offices were opened in New Hampshire and Pennsylvania.

Title-search work began on 1,750 privately owned tracts along the Trail. A flexible process was instituted to identify the best corridor locations in advance of purchase or easement negotiations. It

ATC Headquarters



The building at the corner of Washington Street and Storer College Place that now serves as ATC's headquarters was once three stories tall. It was reduced to two floors after a dynamite-truck explosion miles away in 1948 broke its windows, and the absentee landlord failed to protect the top floor against damage from the elements.

The structure ATC bought was built in 1892 by Potomac Council No. 16 of the Sons of Jonadab, a men's temperance group offering an alternative to Harpers Ferry's 13 saloons of the day. In 1976, it served only as the meeting place for the

thirty-two-man Harpers Ferry Cooking Club. Over the years, the building also had housed Pop Trinkle's soda counter, the local opera house (the town's only stage at the time, home to dramas, musicals, traveling medicine shows, and a big Easter Monday dance), a combination gas station and automobile sales and service agency, an Interwoven Sock company mill, apartments, a gift shop, and a private residence. The first property bought by the Conference, its mortgage was retired on time twenty years later.



The Era of Management and Promotion...

used the cooperative management, or partnership, principles that were as old as the Trail itself, informally binding public officials, the Conference and club volunteers, and the neighboring landowners in common cause. Most of the land was acquired by outright fee-simple purchase. Where an owner wished to continue farming, graze livestock, or extract maple sugar in ways compatible with the Trail concept, the whole range of available tools—from easements to lease-backs to reserved interests—was used to try to meet the multiple interests involved.

The goal was, and is, to have the Trail off roads and in as natural a setting as possible.

Sometimes, the federal agencies could not acquire a parcel (or move quickly enough), but an important natural, scenic, historic, or cultural Trail resource needed to be protected. Facing a

western-oriented bias against public ownership of land on the part of the new Reagan administration's political appointees, ATC in 1982 created a new program, the Trust for Appalachian Trail Lands, maintained wholly with private contributions, to try to acquire privately such property for the corridor or facilitate other forms of protection. (In 1999, the program was renamed the ATC Land Trust.)

The 1979–1980 acceleration in land acquisition prompted considerable discussion within the Conference leadership about the future role of volunteers vis-a-vis the government agencies.

What Now?

It was another of those “what now?” moments, like the one after the initial completion of the Trail. The issues had begun stirring in 1968, with the

shift away from an all-volunteer administration for the Conference as some of the realities of the initial legislation became apparent. Now, with teeth (and money) in the statute, this third era had to be faced, although it would be five more years before the answer started to become more clear: If the federal and state governments now had primary responsibility for locating and protecting the Trailway, what exactly should the Conference, and the volunteers at its center, be doing?

With the changes in focus came changes in leadership. Chairman Zobelein stepped down in August 1979 after a four-year tenure. Charles L. Pugh of Richmond, Virginia, was elected to succeed him at the members' meeting in Carrabassett, Maine, but served only thirteen months. (See article, page 34.) Ruth Blackburn of Bethesda, Maryland, who

OFF THE TRAIL: THE EIGHTIES

- Mount St. Helens blows its top with five hundred times the power of the Hiroshima bomb, Voyager starts to blow the fog off the rest of the universe, and John Lennon is blown away by a guy who got his autograph hours before, up for parole in 2000. John Hinckley tries to kill new President Ronald Reagan sixty days after the Ayatollah gives him hostages for inauguration day.
- Charles Philip Arthur George marries Lady Diana, the first Englishwoman since 1659 to wed the heir to the throne, and Margaret Thatcher takes charge. Sandra Day O'Connor, hiker, takes the all-male out of the Supreme Court, and we start making recyclable space shuttles. Ride, Sally Ride. Walter Cronkite signs off, “Cats” signs on, “M*A*S*H” lasts longer than its war, Halley’s Comet flashes by, and the last Playboy Club shuts down.
- Bob Ballard finds the Titanic, the Common Market forms, and Mikhail Gorbachev starts unraveling the strings that Lenin wove. Terrorists are everywhere and Oliver North is dealing with some of them, Grenada is saved, 150 million Africans face famine in a single year, crazy spending and leveraged buyouts abound, the deficit and the national debt try mightily to catch up with the first trillion-dollar federal budget, and joblessness hits a 42-year high.
- Maya Lin’s black-granite wall in Washington is etched with 57,939 names, dead or missing in Vietnam.
- AIDS emerges out of Africa, smallpox is declared eradicated, the first “permanent” artificial heart goes to a dentist named Barney. “E.T.” Cabbage Patch Kids. MTV, where “the attitude is the message,” says founder Robert Pittman (now of America Online). The “Yuppie” gets a tag. Cari Lightner, 13, is killed in a hit-and-run, and her mother forms Mothers Against Drunk Drivers. Missing kids’ pictures are on milk cartons, Prince William Sound is awash with oil, and Lyme disease is discovered.
- Michael Jackson and Bill Cosby and everywhere, every year, Meryl Streep does every accent. Television goes into the Senate, and Gary Hart starts us sliding down the mucky slope of politicians’ sex lives. Madonna and Rambo. The Statue of Liberty qualifies for a card from Willard Scott. AT&T is broken up, and “William” Gates is just breaking the billion-dollar barrier, but few go broke when the market “crashes” for a day in October 1987. “Program” is no longer just a noun; “crack” becomes one.
- In June, it’s tanks and man in a white shirt in Tiananmen Square. In November, the Berlin Wall comes open and comes down. Six astronauts and a New Hampshire teacher die as Challenger explodes. The population of the Trail states has shifted south and declined 7.5 percent as a proportion of the U.S. whole since Benton MacKaye’s 1921 article. The Equal Rights Amendment, Princess Grace, Indira Gandhi, all die.

had been involved with the Trail and the Conference since the 1930s and was mid-Atlantic vice chairman at the time, and James L. Botts of Lenoir City, Tennessee, the southern vice chairman, became acting cochairmen until Blackburn was elected in November 1980 to lead the Conference for the rest of Pugh's term. Also at that November meeting, Laurence R. Van Meter of Vermont, a former executive director of the Green Mountain Club, resigned his Board seat to accept his colleagues' offer to become the new executive director, effective February 1, 1981, succeeding Hank Lautz, who had resigned in May 1980. David N. Startzell, a staff member since 1978 who would become associate director under Van Meter and then succeed him in November 1986, was acting executive director for this transitional period.

In the early 1980s, the Conference concentrated on increasing its membership, developing a comprehensive plan for management of the Trail and Trailway, conducting its own internal long-range planning, and maintaining both the appropriations for Trail-corridor acquisitions and the working partnership with the federal agencies entrusted with the privately developed Trail as a public resource. As added conduits for information and opinions among the Conference, the agencies, and the clubs—a bonding mechanism, in other words—ATC in 1978 and early 1979 established regional field offices in New England, Pennsylvania, and Tennessee. The Conference also began publication of *The Register*, a special newsletter for volunteer maintainers.

Those efforts—the entire process of redefining the roles of the partners, with ATC at the hub of the wheel—culminated in an agreement unique in the annals of American public-land management. The three-page agreement (see box), to which a longer, detailed memorandum was attached, reaffirmed for all parties the leadership role of the private volunteer in the stewardship of the Trail, even though it had become a public resource under the 1968 act.

On January 26, 1984, with Secretary of the Interior William P. Clark looking on, National Park Service Director



Norm Roy (I) appoints Dave Richie to head the first A.T. Project Office (ATC Archives)

Russell E. Dickenson signed over to the Conference the responsibility for managing in the public interest the lands acquired by the agency for the corridor, as well as for maintaining the footpath.

This Amendment No. 8 to the 1970

work of Benton MacKaye, AIA Journal Editor Clarence Stein, and Charles Whitaker in developing and promoting the original A.T. concept more than 62 years earlier.

Under the pact, ATC guarantees to the National Park Service that the Trail and Trailway are being well cared for. To fulfill its obligation at the immediate level of the resource itself, the Conference subdelegates to the clubs with Trail-maintaining assignments the additional responsibility of corridor management.

But, in doing so, the Conference—in consultation with all parties—develops and publicizes standards, as well as policies, for Trail and trailway design, protection, maintenance, and use. The clubs develop local management plans intended to spell out how those standards will be applied in their particular areas and how disagreements will be resolved (generally through regional management committees, but occasionally at the Board of Managers level).

Putting together the foundations of this new era for the A.T. and the Confer-



ATC Chair Ruth Blackburn (holding photo) during congressional subcommittee testimony. (ATC Archives)

cooperative agreement between the National Park Service and the Appalachian Trail Conference was signed on the mezzanine of the American Institute of Architects headquarters, two blocks from the White House, as a tribute to the team-

ence—developing local plans, assessing corridor resources, refining procedures, broadening the base of governmental partners, *etc.*—became the focus of the organization's work under Startzell's directorship throughout the later

The Era of Management and Promotion...

1980s and into the 1990s, even as the land-acquisition programs and all other aspects of the project continued. By the beginning of 1990, all but 110 miles of the Appalachian Trail had been brought into public ownership.

In the same time period, a lead article in *National Geographic* magazine in February 1987—kicking off the fiftieth-anniversary year for the Trail itself—led to a two- or three-year surge of growth in membership, in publications sales, and in interest by foundations, and in new waves of hikers out on the Trail, testing a decade's worth of "hardening" and special footpath designs intended to stand up to the inevitable next wave of hiking and backpacking enthusiasts.

The Conference went into the 1990s with a membership of nearly 24,000 individuals or families, total assets of \$2.58 million—a gain of 150 percent in just three years—and a "net worth" of more than \$2 million: a position of strength for tackling the costly, demanding, and still not fully defined challenges of its responsibilities under the 1984 agreement.

Fully defined or not, challenges abounded. And, as since the beginning, ATC has not thought small.

It showed itself willing to sue its primary partner, the National Park Service, in the late 1980s for failure to meet the standards of the trails system act when the NPS negotiated a closed-door deal for a permanent

Trail route with the then-owners of the Killington ski resort in Vermont. ATC also arranged for congressional in-



ATC Chair Ray Hunt signs the delegation agreement. (ATC Archives)

tervention, which led to extended mediation sessions, announced agreements, failures to close, and more talks—but, finally,

success and an end to the suit and the controversy by December 1997. The Interior Department ended up giving Startzell its highest award, as it had Ruth Blackburn in the early 1980s.

A land-acquisition controversy that extended nearly as long, where the Trail crossed the Great Valley of the Appalachians in Cumberland County, Pennsylvania, ended in the late 1980s. It took until the '90s

to purchase the route—off the roads and onto farm fields and ridges—and build relations with the communities, bring-

ing the farmers back to work the land and maintain the rural landscape amid rapidly developing interstate-highway sprawl.

Not too far to the north, where the Trail passes from New Jersey into New York, lies 20,000-acre Sterling Forest, the European owners of which filed plans for intensive development right on top of the Trail corridor. An energetic coalition of the New York–New Jersey Trail Conference, ATC, AMC, and other groups in the metropolitan area worked to convince governors of both states to go to their legislatures and to Congress. Sterling Forest is now a state-managed public park.

The Last Acquisition

Those challenges were the preparation for the last and perhaps toughest one, securing a satisfactory permanent route across Saddleback Mountain in western Maine against the opposition of the absentee owner of the adjacent ski area.

While the Conference tackled those negative challenges, the ATC Land Trust program went on to previously unthinkable positive projects: preservation of an



Thru-hikers and Trail-town celebrations proliferate in the 1990s. (ATC Archives)



18th-century farmstead abutting the Trail corridor in southwestern Massachusetts, protection of a 1,600-acre property tying the Trail corridor to the Shenandoah River in northern Virginia, and expansion from a staff of one into a corps of fourteen contract coordinators on the look-out for land and cultural history to preserve. ATC's trust is in the sixth year of its most ambitious project—preserving 4,000-acre Mt. Abraham and associated properties east of the contentious Saddleback section, a more than \$2-million effort.

And, the organization's leadership kept working on Congress, routinely securing for the A.T. one of the highest land-acquisition appropriations each year. Then, in late 1998, with President Clinton (fresh from an hour of Trail work with Vice President Gore) and the congressional appropriations leadership united

behind the Trail, all the remaining federal funds requested to complete protection of the corridor were approved and banked. Today, only twenty miles and fewer than 8,000 acres remain on the list of the most successful park/forest acquisition program on record.

Leading the project among the federal partners, as NPS manager of what is now called the Appalachian Trail Park Office, and reporting directly to Washington in an atypical alignment, is Pamela Underhill, daughter of one of the leaders of the Department of the Interior group that produced the reports that led to the 1968 trails act.

Yet, that overarching goal of Trail-lands acquisition from the organization's earliest years still must contend for attention and energy with direct threats to its protection each year—highway projects, powerline and other utility right-

of-way crossings or parallel visual intrusions, and military overflights and artillery exercises. Most recently, the focus has been on the telecommunications towers sprouting like spring weeds along the ridgelines, requiring a two-year, ATC-led effort to raise the consciousness of that industry to its impacts on an older American recreational experience.

The Conference has not ignored the new technologies. As it expanded its ridgerunner programs in high-use areas, particularly after the brutal slayings of two young thru-hikers in a Pennsylvania shelter in September 1990, it equipped them with cellular telephones. Three years ago, it, too, joined the "world" of the Internet, offering free information of many kinds and also publications for sale at its Web site, <www.appalachian-trail.org>.

The land-management database it

The A.T. Cooperative Management Agreement

During the signing, NPS Director Russell E. Dickenson said, "Our signatures on this agreement evidence faith on the part of government and private partners alike that extensive public lands can safely be entrusted to a private organization."

Secretary Clark commented: "Without its great volunteer tradition, there would be no Appalachian Trail nor would there be such widespread support for its preservation as a part of our national heritage. The Appalachian Trail Conference and its committed volunteers have earned the trust of the American people."

Chairman Raymond F. Hunt of Kingsport, Tennessee, elected to succeed Blackburn in 1983, responded, "We have rounded another significant corner into a new era for the A.T. and ATC.... We intend to accomplish what is expected of us."

Volunteer management of the Trailway, from boundary gates or signs to preservation of cultural and other resources within it, "will be a sizable task, the magnitude of which may not yet be apparent, and will require a higher degree of responsiveness than many clubs may be used to. We welcome the challenge," said Don Derr, then president of the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference.

A.T. Project Office Manager Richie said the transfer of responsibility reflected not only cost-effectiveness but also consensus that the potential for the best job rested with volunteers rather than a government-paid work force. Club maintainers, he said, "are the real specialists in Trail work, and they have more of a commitment. Volunteers really want to do the work."

As Derr noted, the dimensions of this official stewardship responsibility would not be fully perceived for years, but the main thrusts were clear. Corridor management not only embraces disseminating information and devising ways to ensure access to the Trail, it also means verifying boundary lines in the field and meeting such threats to the resources as logging, dumping, and all-terrain vehicles. It has also come to mean taking inventories not only of bridges and other facilities to be maintained but also rare, threatened, and endangered species (and invasive species encroaching on the lands) and historic and other cultural resources within the Trail's lands.

And, while the authority for law-enforcement and fire-control could not be delegated to volunteers, an obligation to establish and oversee procedures for bringing the authorities to the trouble spot could be—and was. They had been tested under fire already, following a double murder at a Virginia shelter in May 1981, the first A.T. homicides in five years and only the third murder incident on record.

That aspect of corridor management requires securing the cooperation of local town, fire, police, and search-and-rescue officials, among other things, as well as developing and promulgating "hiker security" guidelines to the public. A shooting murder of one woman and critical wounding of her companion in May 1988 heightened Conference and club sensitivities to this extension of the cooperative management system into law-enforcement areas.

The Era of Management and Promotion...

initiated as the 1990s began—to collect in one place all the Trail community’s information on each tract of land that makes up the Appalachian National Scenic Trail—has become a model for park managers everywhere, even as ATC begins to weave geographical information systems (GIS) technology into its orbit.

Likewise, ATC has expanded seasonal crew programs—volunteer “shock troops” assigned to help clubs meet the challenges of moving the footpath onto the permanent locations the acquisition program secured and adding overnight-shelter sites to the new demand. Those locations often have previously unthinkable challenges, too, that technology can help with at the design stage (or in working through reams of environmental reviews and regulatory compliance). Bridges across the James River in Virginia and deceptively sleepy Pochuck Creek in New Jersey, examples of such challenges, are in their sixth years of moving toward completion.

ATC club volunteers have even, in a manner of speaking, geared up to meet the challenges of nature. The enormous damage of back-to-back hurricanes and winter or spring floods in the late 1980s



Pamela Underhill and son Mark

and 1990s—comparable to that 1938 hurricane that first severed the newly linked Trail for years—was swiftly overcome and the Trail reopened in a matter of weeks. Fittingly, the secretary of the interior in 1996—starting a publicity walk across the Potomac River from Harpers Ferry, to

gain congressional support for rebuilding funds for the C&O Canal after hurricane-driven flooding destroyed many sections—had to walk past ATC volunteers who were wrapping up their repairs of the A.T. section, a cooperative effort of the Conference, the local club, and two other units of the national park system, underwritten by a corporate member.

Those recoveries were among the more dramatic testimonies to the fact that the Trail project is no longer a matter of less than two hundred high-energy volunteers but instead a product of the work of more than 4,400 volunteers giving more than 180,000 hours a year just in on-the-Trail work. To maintain the resources to support them, ATC, among other measures, created in 1990 a stewardship endowment with a \$100,000 challenge grant. The fund today exceeds \$2.5 million—a third of the Conference’s \$7.5 million or more in total assets, a three-fold increase in a decade.

Annual operating surpluses returned in 1994 after a few years’ hiatus, a decade after the Conference began a determined effort to diversify its sources of income—not only to guard against some sudden loss of one revenue stream, but also to

OFF THE TRAIL: THE NINETIES

- The Soviet Union breaks up into fifteen pieces, Yugoslavia splits into many combustibles peppered in the last year of the decade with air strikes, and the Germanies become Germany. Saddam Hussein invades Kuwait, and the United States chases him out but not down. Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization sign a peace accord and then Israel and Jordan, and South Africa becomes an open democracy.
- Northern Ireland gets a peace plan, Scotland and Wales get legislatures, and the heir to the House of Windsor gets divorced. And, Diana is killed in a car speeding through a tunnel in Paris in the summer.
- After a five-year lull, terrorist bombing comes back. One of the worst: Americans against Americans, at Oklahoma City, 168 federal workers and their children dead. In memory of Waco. O.J. Simpson is acquitted, the government shuts down one Thanksgiving, and the Dow hits 5,000.
- David Souter, hiker, joins the Supreme Court. Janet Reno, hiker, becomes the first woman attorney general, and President Clinton becomes the first chief executive to visit and briefly work on the Appalachian Trail.
- The Unabomber is captured, a machine lands on Mars, Viagra is introduced, the Dow hits 9,000, and Mark McGwire hits 70 home runs.
- Newt Gingrich takes over the House in 1994 but is out in 1998. Clinton becomes the first sitting president held in contempt of court and the first elected president impeached and tried.
- Kids kill kids, most notably at Columbine High in Colorado, John F. Kennedy, Jr., dies in his plane at sea, Michael Jordan retires, and the Dow passes the 11,000 mark.

amass the resources needed to meet its chosen tasks. In the 1970s, publications sales had carried the budget for the most part. Deliberate, step-by-step advances were taken, not only in direct-mail fund-raising, but also toward potential corporate, foundation, and public-agency supporters and individual philanthropists.

Membership has risen dramatically the last three years—after sitting on a plateau for most of the '90s—to top 32,000 just recently. The staff has grown as well, to nearly 45 year-round employees, backed by a dozen seasonal workers during the spring, summer, and fall.

Even with all that growth in various sectors to meet the challenges of land management, many involved in the Conference's modern work feel a fourth era, or priorities layer, is in the process of coalescing out of a strategic plan that the Board and se-

nior staff members have been developing for the better part of three years. The hope is to define ATC's twenty-first-century values and priorities and desired new ini-



Executive Director Dave Startzell, left, with Rep. Ralph Regula (Ohio), the House appropriations subcommittee chairman who led the way for the final funding for A.T. protection (NPS Photo)

tiatives, in order.

Much of its focus, in land-management jargon, is on "visitor services." Others might see it as taking care of the "heart"

of the Trail project (the people who enjoy walking any part of it) as well as ATC takes care of the Trail's "soul" (the volunteers who maintain it) and its "body" (the natural resources themselves).

That layer would be fitting and proper, closing the circle, but none of those challenges—in detail or sweeping concept—can transcend for the Conference the simple, singular focus of the Appalachian Trail itself, a century after a boy named Ben climbed Stratton Mountain.

"If we ever forget that the Trail is our reason for being as an organization, we are in deep trouble," Conference Chairman Ray Hunt wrote in a year-end message in 1987. "That is a simple statement, but one that is vital to the success—

past and future—of the Appalachian Trail Conference."



President Clinton and Vice President Gore prepare to place a 165-pound capstone on a retaining wall on the Appalachian Trail for Earth Day 1998. The ready hands of veteran crew leader Bob Smith guide them. (Copyright 1998, Wide World Photos)



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