

## WHO WERE OUR FOUNDERS?

As part of our 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, MCM will be sharing information about various topics in our club history. As the first set of History Facts, at this time I would like to highlight three of the Mountain Club's founders: Orville Crowder, Osborne (Os) Heard, and Alex Kennedy. All of them were members of the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club before MCM existed.

Kennedy later wrote that in the late twenties, when he arrived in Baltimore from California, he was disappointed to find no organization like the Sierra Club here. Someone referred him to PATC, with which he hiked sporadically. He said that "To be sure of meeting (for a PATC hike) at the Treasury steps by 7 a.m. sharp, it was necessary to leave Baltimore soon after 5 a.m." On some of these hikes he met "some similarly deprived Baltimoreans—Orville Crowder and Os Heard come to mind... We would talk occasionally of a Baltimore Club." Eventually, seven or eight people, including Crowder and Heard, met at Kennedy's house in Ruxton and it was decided to go ahead with organizing a Baltimore-based club.

Crowder organized a hike on Sunday, October 21, 1934, from Crampton Gap (now Gathland State Park) to Weverton Cliffs. He promoted it by writing:

**"Looking to the later organization of a Baltimore Trail or Mountain Club, this hike is planned to provide an opportunity for local mountain-minded folk to become acquainted. Won't you pass this information on to your hiker friends and suggest they come along?"**

Hikers were encouraged to bring lunch and a canteen. Round trip transportation (by chartered bus) was 65 cents.

A young man named Jack Mowll, only recently turned 18 years of age and a newcomer to Baltimore, saw a postcard notice of the hike on a bulletin board at the Enoch Pratt Library. All one had to do was show up at 7 a.m. at the Irvington carbarn. Mowll got up before dawn that day, walked to a streetcar stop on Harford Road, and managed to reach the Irvington stop in time. He found himself riding in a car with two other persons to Frederick, where the entire group assembled for breakfast and then continued to Crampton Gap. Mowll later wrote that Crowder "was a natural leader and organized the trip with meticulous care."

Twenty-seven 27 hikers joined the event that day. Crowder suggested the formation of a hiking club when the group stopped for lunch at Weverton. He led two hikes in November: one from Smithsburg to Pen-Mar and one from Ilchester to Orange Grove. A meeting to discuss the formation of a club was held on Dec 4, 1934, at the Enoch Pratt Library. Crowder, Alex Kennedy and Osborne Heard wrote the MCM Club bylaws soon after the December meeting and a Trip Schedule was created. The first official MCM hike took place in January 1935.

Kennedy wrote a few years later, "The fundamental thing, of course, is that, but for Orville there would have been no Mountain Club... I was a member of the Washington Club before Orville... I talked with P.A.T.C officers about a Baltimore club... Had it been left to me we would probably still be corresponding! When Orville realized the need, with characteristic energy, he suggested starting immediately. The initial meeting was held in my house in Ruxton. I believe about eight were present. I nominated him for President... Orville brought to the task not only

intelligence, a willingness to work, a passion for detail, but above all that most necessary of attributes – faith in the work at hand... Since then the club has never looked back.”

In addition to leading the formation of the Mountain Club, **Orville Crowder** was an avid outdoorsman. During his lifetime he climbed to the highest point in every state except Alaska and Hawaii. In 1937 he became the third person to hike the entire length of the trail from Maine to Georgia. He was an enthusiast in birds, wildflowers, astronomy, and natural history. In the early 1960's he founded Crowder Nature Tours, one of the first overseas nature travel groups, and either led, met with, or joined approximately 128 tours. He traveled around the world eight times and visited all but six countries. Here is a photo of Crowder in the striped hiking pants that were a favorite:



**Os Heard** worked in the embryology department at Johns Hopkins Medical School. Except for than a term as the fourth MCM president in 1943-1944, he served as our Supervisor of Trails from 1934 until 1952, A fellow club member later wrote, “By the time the Mountain Club ... was formed, Os knew the area well and had explore the choice wild areas of the surrounding states.

Here was a young man who knew things of nature, where to find them, and how to hike and camp outdoors. He was an ideal person to be part of the founding group of the Mountain Club of Maryland.”

According to other club members, **Alex Kennedy** had a dry wit and a Scotch-English brogue. Alex became the club’s third president (1941-1942) and served for many years as an MCM Councilor.

These three founders were captured in this photo on a hike a few years later.



Without the efforts of these three, especially Crowder, the Mountain Club would not exist today in its current form.

Our next topic: Women in the early Mountain Club.