

WORLD WAR II AND THE MOUNTAIN CLUB: TRAINS, TROLLEYS AND TRUCKS

The Mountain Club was only seven years old when the U.S. entered World War II. The wartime restrictions that went into effect the following year raised concerns among the leaders of our small club about whether its outdoors program could survive. Looking back to 80 years ago, it can be hard for us to appreciate how challenging the time must have been for a hiking and Trail club.

Starting in early 1942, gasoline was deemed a precious commodity that was needed to fuel military vehicles for the war effort. But Americans still needed fuel for their cars in order to get to work, so the government implemented a system to regulate the purchase of gasoline. Car owners were issued a Gasoline Ration Card that had One Unit tabs on the bottom that were punched when used. Along with the card, a windshield sticker with a specific letter was issued. The most popular was an “A” card/sticker that allowed the car owner to purchase about 4 gallons of gas each week. If you were employed in a factory that supported the war effort, you were issued a “B” card, while doctors, nurses, farm and construction workers, and mail employees were issued a “C” card, each of which allowed them to buy up to 8 gallons of gas per week. There were other specific cards, too, such as an “X” card for members of Congress, “E” for emergency vehicles, “R” for non-highway farm vehicles, and “T” for truckers. The limited ability to purchase gasoline meant that Mountain Club members could no longer drive long distances to trails.

The MCM Council meeting minutes during that time don’t really discuss the gasoline rationing situation directly—probably because everyone knew about it. But, as explained below, there are comments in various club documents that show the impact of gas rationing on MCM’s ability to continue our hiking program (especially since we were a mountain club) and to reach our Appalachian Trail (A.T.) section in Pennsylvania (PA) to do maintenance work.

In our 50th Anniversary book, [MCM First Person: 1934-984](#), which you can view at [MCM-First-Person-50th-Anniversary.pdf \(mcomd.org\)](#), the discussion of MCM’s history at the beginning of the book summarized the situation in this way: “Gasoline rationing during WWII led to a revamping of club hiking activities because it was necessary to rely heavily on public transportation. In general, work trips were suspended, but not completely.” I’ve reviewed our newly available newsletters and Council meeting minutes to get a better sense of what took place.

Impact on Hiking

In the July-September 1942 MCM Bulletin newsletter, the new club president, Os Heard, described the club’s dilemma: *“What immediately lies ahead of us as a mountaineering group is of such a nature that the purpose for which the club was founded may be jeopardized... Practically all of our activities have been predicated on the use of*

automotive transportation and for the present we must find alternatives that dovetail into the expressed purposes of the club... I suggest we bend every effort to keep the club intact (1) by continuing hikes within a reasonable distance...and by conducting a series of symposia on mountains and mountaineering.” Clearly, the word Mountain in our name was very important to the club leadership at that time; if they could not hike in the mountains, they at least would try to schedule presentations about the mountains and mountaineering.

The following year, in his annual report printed in the July-September 1943 Bulletin, President Heard quoted a remark made by the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC) president: “As long as the war lasts, we... must of course bow gracefully to the necessary restrictions on our activities, but it is essential that we maintain a strong organization in order to make the most of the opportunities that may be offered.” Heard suggested that MCM shared this goal.

Forty years later, MCM member Winslow Hartford’s personal reminiscence in the MCM 50th anniversary book looked back at this period:

By June [1942], gas rationing had become a fait accompli, and the Club was faced with a decision—to cancel its trip schedule or to operate as best it could using public conveyances... The decision handed down by president elect Heard at the annual meeting was a wise and momentous one: “I suggest we keep the club intact by continuing hikes within a reasonable distance.”

Hartford served as the MCM Excursion Chairman during the wartime period, and he described our hike situation as follows:

It was a fascinating challenge. For three and a half years, our mountains become those accessible by the Ma and Pa, the Western Maryland, the Pennsy, the B&O, the Hanover bus, and the BTC [Baltimore Transit Co. trolley system]. Twenty members of MCM entered the services; one, Carl Anderson, failed to return. Appalachian Trail maintenance suffered for a while, but in 1943, the ODT [Office of Defense Transportation] ruled this a job for which a truck could be rented; so our work trips, with a promise of real mountains, became among our most popular activities.”

As Hartford explained, there were significant changes to the MCM hike schedule during the gas rationing period, with a complete focus on hikes that could be reached using public transportation (trains, buses, and trolleys). The old MCM documents that recently have been scanned by the Maryland State Archives (photo scrapbooks, newsletters, and Council meeting minutes) give us an opportunity to better understand the changes that took place.

Comparing trip schedules before and during the war gives us an insight about how hiking was affected. Here are the upcoming trips listed in the October-December 1940 MCM Bulletin—a year before the Pearl Harbor attack.

DATE	DESTINATION	TRANSPORTATION
Sunday, 10/6/1940	Peters Mountain, PA	Hikers would receive meeting place and transportation information when from the hike leader when they called to sign up
Saturday, 10/12/40	Little Gunpowder Falls	
Sunday, 10/20/40	Upper Harford County – Falling Branch and Deer Creek	
Saturday-Sunday, 10/26-27/40	Overnight and Halloween Party, Catoctin Recreational Area	
Saturday, 11/2/40	Timonium to Padonia	
Saturday-Sunday, 11/9-10/40	Shenandoah National Park	
Sunday, 11/24/40	Caledonia, PA	
Saturday, 12/7/40	Loch Raven	
Sunday, 12/15/40	Ellicott City	
Sunday, 12/22/2024	Bird census in Loch Raven	

While this “prewar” schedule had plenty of hikes in the greater Baltimore area, there were also hikes to the Shenandoah Mountains, Peters Mountain (north of Harrisburg), the Catoctin area, and Caledonia State Park. Hikers were told the meeting place and travel plans when they contacted the hike leader (and some of them would be recruited as car pool drivers).

By contract, here is a list of upcoming hikes one year after our entry into the war, in the October – December 1942 Bulletin. Almost all hikes were in the greater Baltimore area, and some were in the city itself. There are a few hikes to southern PA and Thurmont, but every hike on the schedule relied on travel by train or trolley.

DATE	DESTINATION	TRANSPORTATION
Saturday, 10/3/42	Old Court Road / Mt Washington	No. 25 carline
Saturday-Sunday, 10/10-11/42	Overnight to farm on Western Run	Penn Station to Cockeyville Station, then 2-mile walk
Sunday, 10/18/42	Glen Echo - C&O Canal	Train to Washington + car ride
Monday, 10/26/42	Moonlight Hike – Bare Hills	Meet at Mt. Washington, No. 25 carline
Saturday-Sunday, 10/31 – 11/1/42	Gunpowder Falls	Leave from Penn Station
Sunday, 11/8/42	Thurmont	Western Maryland Railroad from Penn Station

Saturday, 11/14/42	Lorraine / Woodlawn Section	No. 25 carline to Lorraine
Sunday, 11/22/42	Padonia to Cockeyville	Leave from Penn Station to Cockeyville
Sunday, 11/29/42	Glen Rock, PA	Leave from Penn Station
Saturday, 12/5/42	Herring Run	Meet at Walther Ave and Harford Road
Sunday, 12/13/42	Carrolton (Patapsco River}	Leave Penn Station on Western Maryland Railroad
Sunday, 1/10/43	Ellicott City to Randallstown	Meet at B&O Station in Ellicott City
Saturday, 1/16/43	Lake Roland Area	Meet at end of No. 24 carline
Sunday, 1/24/42	Perryville	Leave from Penn Station

The photo scrapbooks from those years add a better sense of the hikers' experiences. Below are some photos showing hikers assembling at various train stations as they head out to, or return from, MCM hikes.

CARROLL COUNTY
 UNION BRIDGE - BIG PIPE CREEK, ETC.
 SEPTEMBER 1942



"ROAD CLEAR"



"GETTING ASSEMBLED"



WELL, WE'LL NAME THEM: WINSLOW HARTFORD, RAY COSTA, ALICE WAGNER,
 PAULINE FELLMAN, MADELINE FLEMING, ALICE BROWN, MIRIAM COSTA, RUTH LENDERKING,
 WALTER RACHHEIMER, OS HEARD, DOROTHY WATSON, MOE FLEMING, GWYNETH HUGHES,
 MORGAN BARR, LEON LERNER, MERLE HEART.

NEW FREEDOM TO PARKTON - FEB. 28, 1943



SNOW IN THE PARK





4TH OF JULY
PACK TRIP

JULY 3-4-5, 1943

ON THE APPALACHIAN
TRAIL FROM PENMAR
TO THE PINE KNOB
LEAN-TO, THEN TO
SMITHSBURG BY
WAY OF THE BARTOWN
ROAD, ETC. ETC.

SORRY; IT WASN'T
PEN-MAR; BY TRAIN
TO EDMONT,
THEN UP THE
MOUNTAIN TO
THE TRAIL.

THE THURMONT TROLLEY
BOBS HILL - IN-THE-CATOCTINS-TRIP
JUNE 13, 1943



Here are photos of MCM hikers waiting at the Thurmont station on October 24, 1943, and May 31, 1944.



TIME TO SPARE AT THURMONT

wmr

SANITARIUM STATION TO THURMONT
MAY 21, 1944



AT THURMONT STATION - BEFORE THE TRAIN

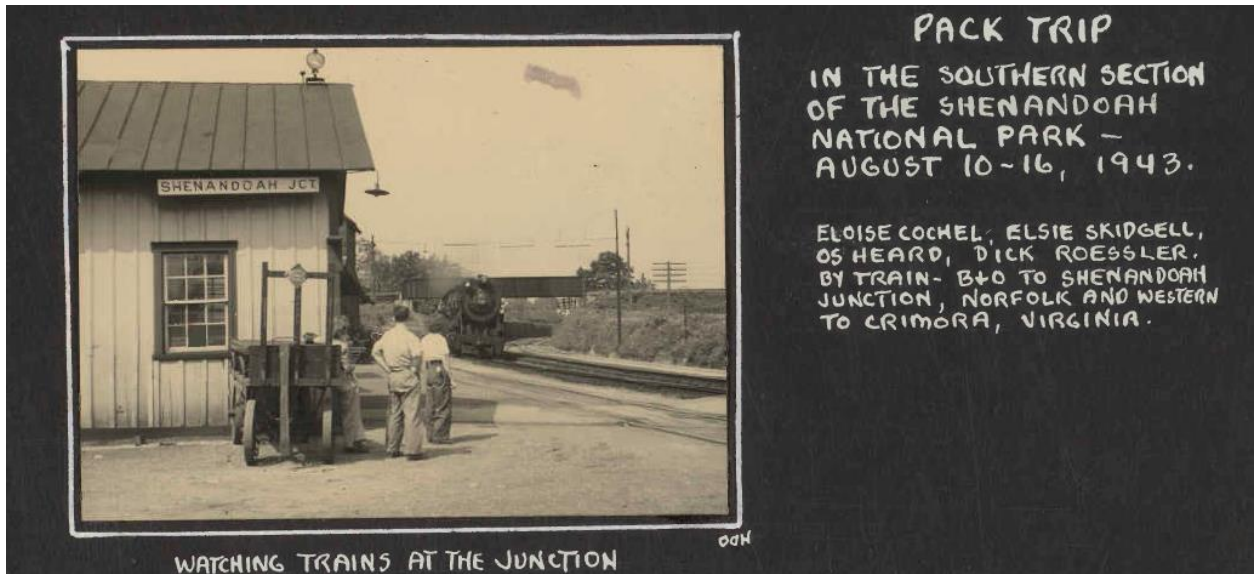
Overall, this use of mass transit was successful in keeping the club's hiking program going, although the number of participants declined. In the Oct-Dec 1943 newsletter, the report of the Excursions Committee stated,

For the first time since the Club's organization, private cars and chartered busses have been unavailable and it has been necessary to use the facilities afforded by the railroads operating out of Baltimore... The schedule has been maintained at an activity comparable with past year. 30 trips were held during the season, including 3 overnights, 1 all-night, and 8 Saturday trips. 379 hikers... attended the trips, as compared with 832 hikers last years. The demands of war activities, as well as the increased cost and more limited scope of the trips all contribute to this decrease. However, several trips, particularly those reaching mountain areas, compare favorably in attendance with similar trips run by private car in previous years.

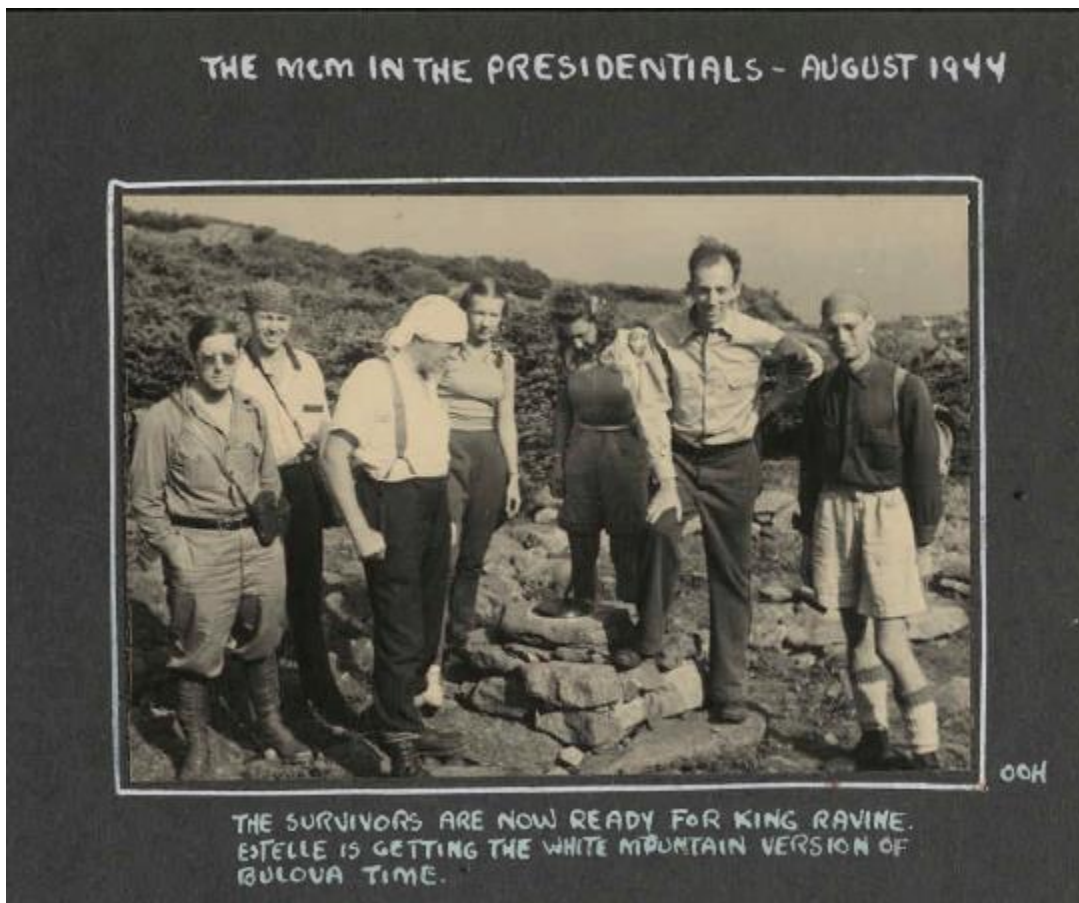
In his own personal reminiscence in the MCM 50th Anniversary book, Alex Kennedy provided a first-person description of a couple of those hikes:

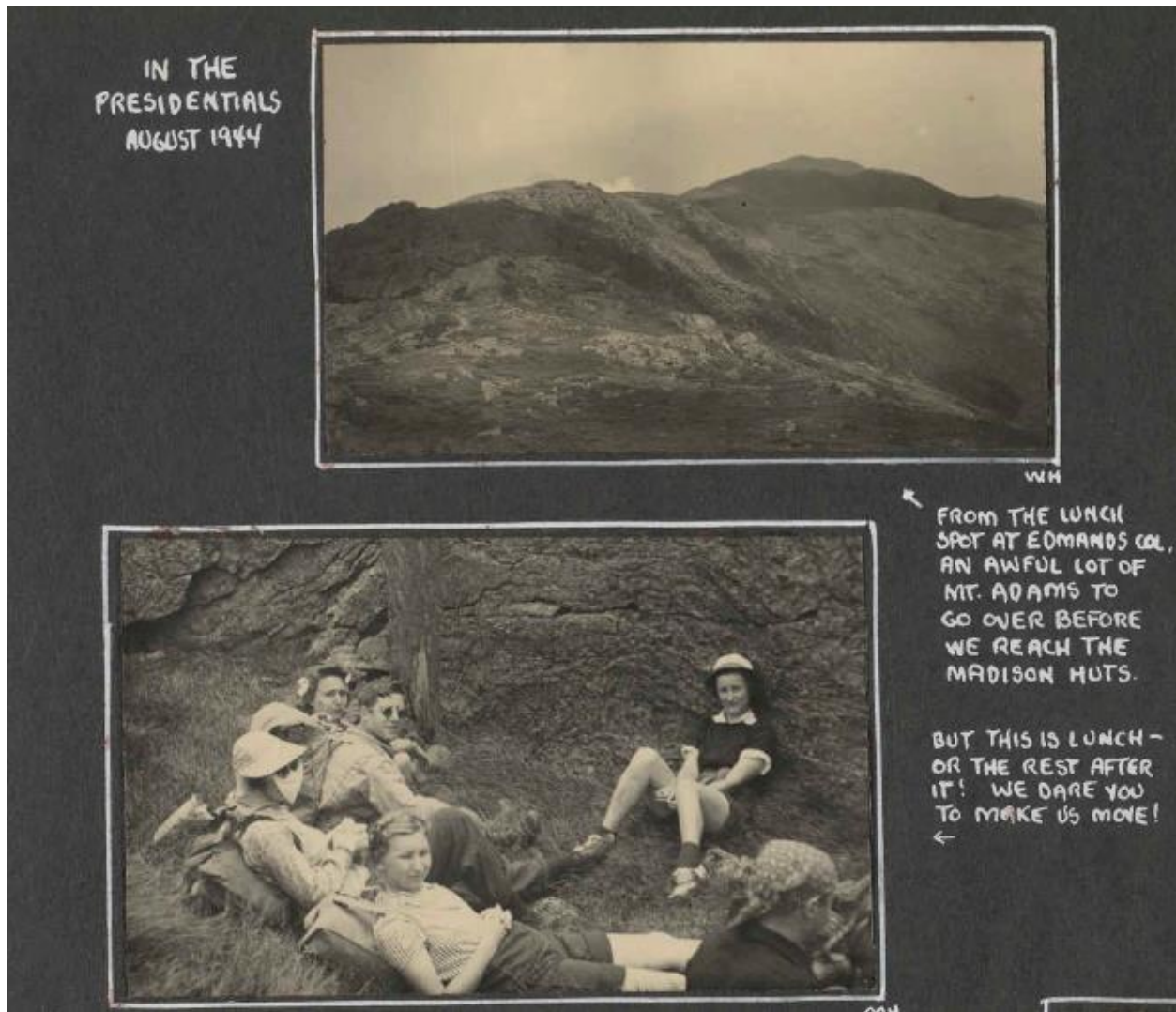
The outbreak of World War II, of course, materially affected the growth of the club and the time available for its activities. It survived primarily by using regularly scheduled public transportation. Two trips occur to me; on one, we went up to Hampstead by bus and walked over to Parkton, returning by the North Central Railroad. Since it snowed steadily and was so cold that at lunchtime the water in our canteens was frozen solid, this trip was afterwards referred to as the Retreat from Moscow... On the other, a very few of us were able to go up to the Rocks area, on a typical summer day, by the Ma and Pa railroad. A really threatening storm developed on the return trip, blowing down a large tree across the tracks. ...[W]e organized a volunteer group among the passengers and eventually succeeded in reopening the right of way.

Despite the difficulties, the club did find ways to schedule some longer mountain hiking trips, such as a week-long "pack trip" in Shenandoah National Park in August 1943. But it appears that only four members undertook the rigors of the railroad trip.



There was a larger attendance at this week-long White Mountains trip in August 1944, which must also have relied on railroad travel.





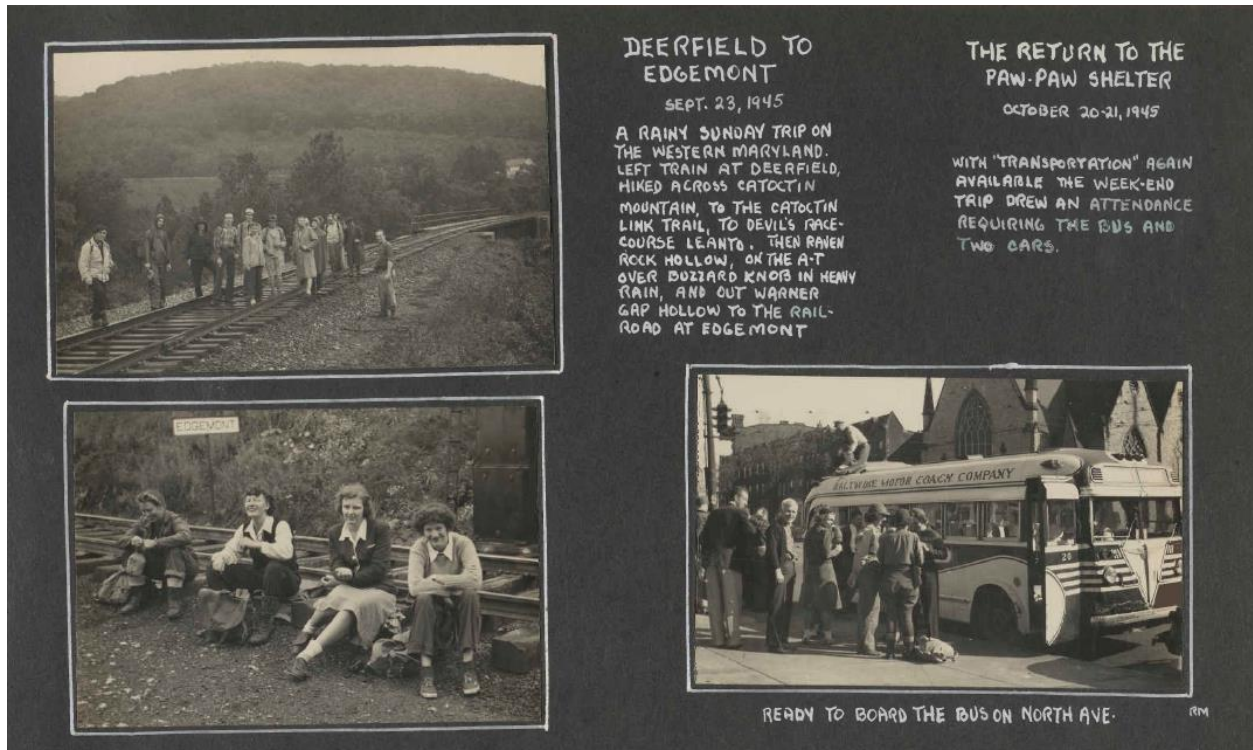
In the latter part of 1945, rationing must have ended, because the Oct-Dec 1945 Bulletin announced a transition policy:

IMPORTANT: This schedule represents a transition to MCM peace-time ways. It is not an “all-out” schedule, but rather a compromise, permitting us to once more “go to the mountains” without imposing too much strain on cars or tires. Trips for the present, are at cost; later, private are trips may be converted to bus trips at no increase in cost.

FOR CAR DRIVERS: Private car trips are scheduled to go not over 100 miles from Baltimore, and hikes will be so scheduled that a speed of 35-40 mph need not be exceeded...

Because of the uncertain food situation, we are not making arrangements for supper, as a club, on Sunday trips. It will therefore be wise to take along a little extra to eat on the way home.

The trip schedule in that final 1945 Bulletin had a selection of hikes that were more remote from the Baltimore, but some of the hikes were still relying on mass transit, as shown by the photos below.



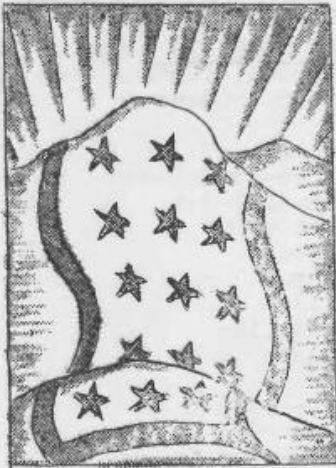
But the January-March 1946 schedule has no mention of using trains to reach hikes, which suggests that using automobiles was the norm again.

MCM Members in the Armed Forces

Of course, a substantial number of MCM members served in the armed forces during the wartime period. In the July-September 1943 Bulletin, president Os Heard wrote: "During the past year we have not only increased our membership by 10% but we have given up 7% to the armed forces." A year later, the July-Sep 1944 newsletter included a Secretary's Report which includes a statement that "The Club membership at present comprises 89 members, 3 honorary members, and 15 service members, a total of 107." Those numbers suggest that about 14% of members were in the service in 1944.

Council minutes mention that the club sent Christmas cards to the members who were in the armed forces. And through the war, the MCM newsletters included special pages devoted to its members in the services—they were sometimes called the Roll of Honor and sometimes the Service Page--that reported on the location of its service members and sometimes included their own reports of their activities. I've included some examples below:

Here is a Roll of Honor page from the April-June 1943 Bulletin.



ROLL OF HONOR

Our Roll of Honor is growing! Young women as well as men are now included in our service list. Because of frequent changes of address we have adopted the policy of listing the address only when one has just entered the Service. It will be wise to check with the secretary before writing anyone. Will you also cooperate by informing the secretary promptly of any changes that you have heard.

Don't forget to send that card!

.....

Lieut. (j.g.) Leonard M. Bahr
U.S.N.T.S. (Recognition)
Ohio State University (Baker Hall, Room 4020)
Columbus, Ohio

Pvt. Frank N. Calafiore -- still in Mississippi

Trainee Ruth Caples
Aux. Co. 7, 21st Regiment
Third WAAC Training Center
Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia

Capt. Raymond Creekmore -- use home address

Pvt. Philip H. Glatfelter -- present address unknown

Lieut. George Hay Kain, Jr. -- still at New Jersey station

Lieut. (j.g.) William A. Kemper
U. S. N. Proving Ground
Dahlgren, Virginia

Lieut. Victor Monke -- stationed Salt Lake City, Utah

Pvt. J. U. Mowll -- transferred to Texas

Pvt. Arthur J. O'Neill, Jr. -- use home address


Ensign David W. Prudden -- now stationed at Pearl Harbor

Dr. Bernard Thomas, Jr. -- at sea

Estelle Wetzler, A.S.
Company B 1145
Naval Training School (W.R.)
Bronx, N. Y.

Pvt. George C. Wilcox, Jr. -- still at Aberdeen

Here is the Service Page from the October-December 1943 Bulletin.



Five minutes in a foxhole with a letter from home may give a lift to a soldier that will stay with him for days. Did your letter do that? Or did you write one? And please send Eleanor Reindollar any news or additions before the deadline!

Lieut. (j.g.) Leonard M. Bahr U.S.N.T.S. (Recognition) 325 Roosevelt St. Hollywood, Florida	Lieut. Victor Monke Wright Field Dayton, Ohio
Lieut. Ed Boettiger A.C. Altitude Training Unit Christie Air Base Christie, Washington	Pvt. Jack U. Mowll still in Texas
T5/Cpl. Frank N. Calafiore U. S. Army, 33,200,282 310 Engineer Battalion, Co. C A.P.O. 85, c/o Postmaster Los Angeles, California	Pvt. Arthur J. O'Neill home address
Aux. 1st Class Ruth Caples 722 WAC Post Hg. Co. Bergstrom A. A. Field Boston, Texas	Ensign David Prudden Pearl Harbor, T. H.
Pvt. Phil Gladfelter overseas	Dr. Bernard Thomas, Jr. still at sea
Lieut. (j.g.) William Kemper US Naval Proving Ground Dahlgren, Virginia	Estelle M. Wetzler Ph. M. 3-C Naval Hospital Portsmouth, New Hampshire
	T5 George C. Wilcox, Jr. Headquarters, #309 OTC Atlanta Ordnance Depot Atlanta, Georgia
	Lieut. George Kain still in New Jersey

And here is the Service Page (2 pages) from the January-March 1944 newsletter.



Instead of the usual column of names and addresses, this time snatches of letters from our service mail reveal news about widely scattered Club members. Nearly everybody has moved or been transferred this fall, so call Eleanor for new addresses.

From Lt.-Commander Bernard O. Thomas, M.D.:

".....It sure is good to read about what you all are doing and to think about the AT.

"I was on the U. S. S. Pocomoke for two years wandering from Newfoundland to the Fijis. It was somewhat of a surprise to me to find such a large number of people from all different sections of our country and from other countries who were hiking enthusiasts. I take exception to the "New-fies" who never walk anywhere without a very definite purpose. In fact they gave us very dubious glances which registered a touch of pity when they saw us 'setting out' over the hills. This scorn we couldn't understand until the day we got lost.

"I very recently had temporary duty in Florida and passed Mt. Oglethorpe. Having climbed Kahtadin some years ago it irked me that I couldn't take the day off to complete the other end of the trail. However with it all, I will put the Harpers Ferry section up against any place I have seen for scenic beauty."

From Sgt. Jack Mowll:

".....As you can see, I'm still in the Texas Campaign. With a little luck we'll win it any year now. Give my regards to everybody."

We are glad to get comments from Cpl. Frank Calafiore on prospective Bulletin cover designs and suggested changes in Council organization. Army life may have changed some of Frank's ideas but the spirit is still the same.

Pvt. Phil Gladfelter was stationed in Trinidad. While exploring a jungle cave on assignment to get a story about it for the post paper, he fell when his rope broke, and broke his back in three places. One leg was paralyzed and he developed pleurisy. He had to be left all night before he could be carried down-trail to the nearest place a jeep could come. He hopes to be shipped home soon.

Service Page cont. (2nd page)

Capt. Raymond Creekmore has apparently recovered his health, and was in town in November.

T 5 George Wilcox has been discharged from the Army and is now back home.

Ensign David Irudden writes:

".....Seems sort of funny to hear about Club trips starting on time.

"My activities are pretty much curtailed with a bad foot that makes any walking pretty difficult. Too bad, since I have a cottage up in one of the valleys in Honolulu, with good climbs a block or two away on each side. Rock climbing isn't much good here. Mostly lava in an advanced stage of decay.....or with little strength to it. The dolomites and granites you have to work with are not appreciated fully until trying some of this. Add to all that the military restriction on hiking on most of the old mountain trails and the picture here is somewhat discouraging. None, of course, of the autumn coloring in the trees and bushes. Instead, most of the bushes in my yard are now in flower -- gorgeous blooms, but I'd like to see some frosted dogwood and maples. Aloha."

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The club also adopted a policy of making their facilities available to U.S. armed services members who were not Mountain Club members. I'm not clear what facilities MCM had to offer—they probably meant that service members could participate in the club activities as guests; there is a mention in one report that a service member attended one of the club square dances as a guest.

Appalachian Trail Maintenance

Overall, the maintenance of the entire Appalachian Trail languished during the 1940s because the nation's resources were focused on the war effort. Trail work stopped where it could not be reached by public transportation. Some sections were closed during the war because of military activities. Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) crews that had been doing Trail relocations ended. And many Trail clubs' members went into the services.

A few years after the war, when Earl Shaffer did the first end-to-end thru hike in 1948, many parts of the A.T. were still not passable. Shaffer had to bushwack long distances at multiple areas because of a lack of blazing, or because whole Trail sections had been destroyed—e.g., by a hurricane in one case, and by the construction of the Blue Ridge

Parkway in another. In fact, the Appalachian Trailway News had recently published an article stating that such a hike was considered impossible, especially considering the poor condition of the Trail after World War II. (See From Dream to Reality: History of the Appalachian Trail, Thomas R. Johnson, pp. 262-265 and 279-281.)

Since MCM's assigned section of the A.T. was about 100 miles from Baltimore, reaching the Trail to perform work, with the added constraint of gas rationing, was even more challenging than it had been before the war. But Mountain Club leadership showed considerable dedication in their efforts to carry out work trips to its Trail section during the war years.

The trip schedules provided in the quarterly MCM newsletter issues (the Bulletin) in the years right before the war suggest that the usual MCM practice was to schedule several work trips to the Trail in the spring. Sometimes there were additional trips in the fall, but not always.

For example, the April-June 1941 schedule shows work trips on May 24 and June 15, with no planned work trips shown in the other Bulletin schedules in 1941. Similarly, the schedule for the spring of 1942 shows two planned work trips on May 24 and June 14, but none in other 1942 schedules. The May 1942 Council minutes indicate that a bus was available for the work trip, but it would mean another "deficit" for the club. The Council agreed to accept the loss in order to finish our section of the Trail. This probably happened before the gas rationing rules were implemented, so it seems likely that the club probably had rented buses for work trips in previous years to accommodate large numbers of volunteers.

But the effect of gas rationing on Trail maintenance became evident in 1943, when MCM announced that volunteers would need to travel to our Trail section by train. The April-June 1943 Bulletin listed a planned three-day work trip on May 29-31 and provided the following information to its volunteers:

The problem of Trail maintenance is definitely acute at this time. Parts that have been well cared for will easily carry over a year. Sections adjacent to regular transportation routes should be looked after at all costs. Every effort should be made to have them cleared in late May or early June... It will take a minimum of two days if we go to Harrisburg... What ever plan is followed we will probably make the work trips two day camping trips if this can be arranged.

Another section of the same newsletter gave more details:

Comes spring and again the underbrush starts to grow along the A.T. Getting to the Trail this year will not be as convenient as in the past, but it can be done... Much of the trail we have maintained in the past can be reached by train or bus via Harrisburg. In any case it will be necessary to plan on an overnight trip, packing in some miles to this overnight camp.

The weekend of May 29-31 has been set apart for work trips. ... Train service is available to Brandtsville [near Boiling Springs], leaving at 2:15 P.M. Saturday, returning Monday morning.

Despite the travel constraints and the distance to our A,T. section, MCM clearly was dedicated to its Trail responsibilities.

In the October-December 1943 Bulletin, the trail supervisor reported that the weekend of June 19 saw six MCM members working on the Trail section between PA-94 and Brandtsville. He reported that after a crowded train trip to Harrisburg on the Pennsy, the ride to Boiling Springs on the Reading was a joy. A local resident at Boiling Springs gave them a ride to Dark Hollow. There was no train returning on Sunday, and the bus they planned to return on was packed full, so they had to wait for a later bus. This June 19 trip may have occurred as a replacement to the planned 3-day May trip, because I did not find any report of results for a May work trip—or the June trip may have been a follow-up. Either way, the description shows the challenges MCM volunteers endured to keep up its Trail work. And the fact that there were only six volunteers suggests that the travel difficulties discouraged volunteers.

The next spring another work trip to PA involving travel by train was planned, but government rules changed in time for MCM to change its approach. The schedule in the April-June 1944 Bulletin announced that another multi-day work trip would take place on July 1-4, 1944, but soon after, in the June 1944 Council minutes, it was reported that MCM would be able to rent a truck for the July work trip. The club hoped to obtain 20 volunteers based on the capacity of the truck.

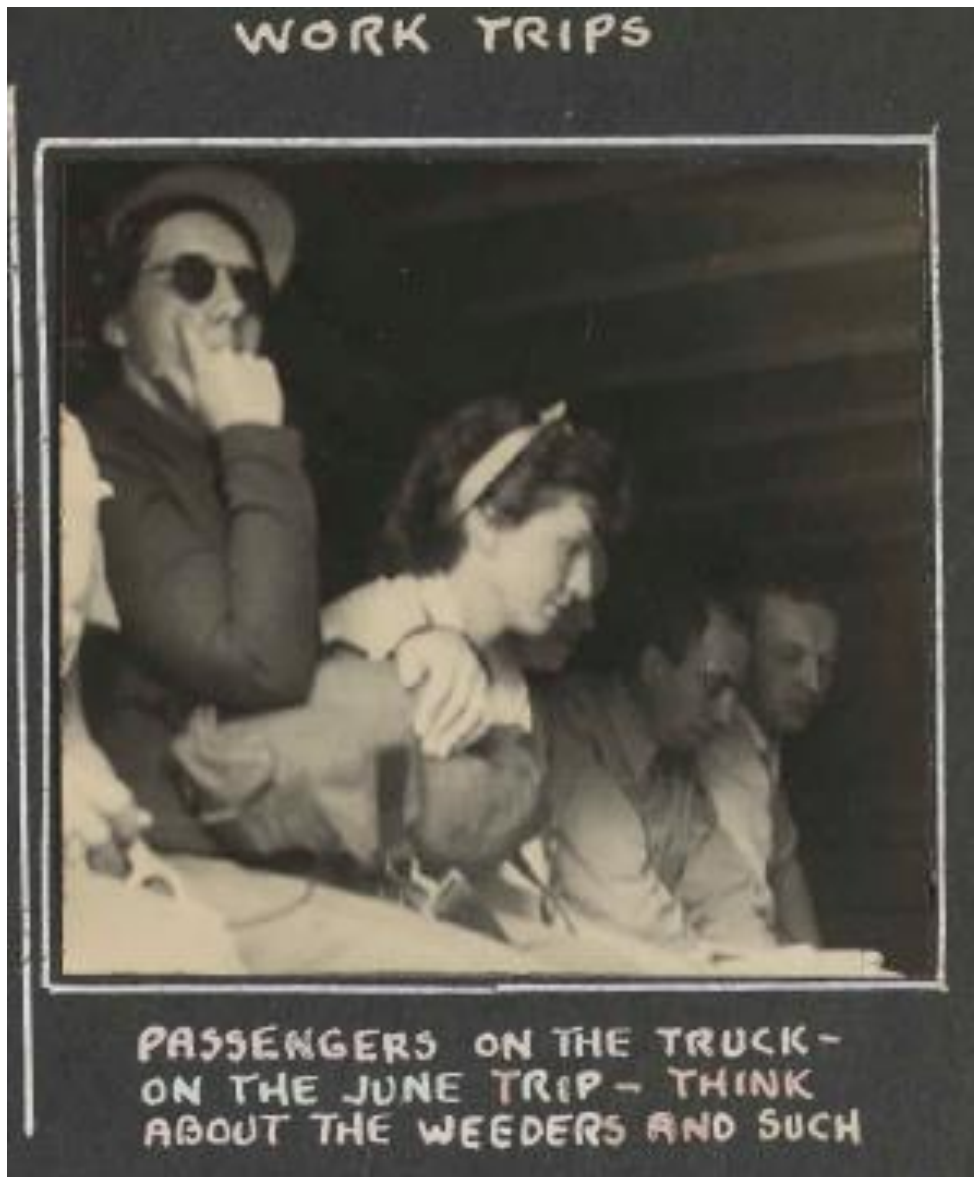
The July-September 1944 newsletter announced the reason for this change:

EXTRA. ODT regulations permit our hiring a truck to do the important job of maintaining our section of A.T. Incidentally, a chance to visit the mountains. Because of restricted capacity of the truck, registrations are limited to those who really want to clear trail.

This must have been a big improvement over the challenge of volunteers traveling to the Trail area by train and then facing the possibility of foot travel to reach the Trail.

That same July-September 1944 newsletter also reported on a completed July 2 work trip (replacing the planned 3-day trip) for which MCM used a rented four-ton truck. Twenty-four (24) volunteers rode 140 miles in the truck to work on 10 miles of the Trail. Apparently, a lot more members were willing to undertake a long truck ride than deal with train and bus rides. There was a discussion in Council minutes of a second trip in the fall, but apparently that trip did not take place.

The MCM scrapbook for 1944 includes one photo of that work trip.



Given the full turnout for that work trip and the ones that followed the next year, the idea of a truck trip to the mountains must have felt like an adventure. The following year, in his review of 1945, the trail supervisor reported that during the year MCM was able to operate three work trips since rental trucks could now be used for this purpose. The average attendance for those trips was 25 persons—a full truck load of volunteers. Even in the spring of 1946, after the end of the war, MCM continued to use a truck to transport volunteers to its work trips. But the July-September 1946 schedule indicated a bus would be used for a September trip--apparently indicating that work trips, as well as hikes, had now returned to prewar practices.