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# “NOT MUCH OF A JOB”: EVERYDAY LIFE AND LABOR AT CAMP AU TRAIN

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# “NOT MUCH OF A JOB”: EVERYDAY LIFE AND LABOR AT CAMP AU TRAIN

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# Abstract

In this thesis, I use data from Camp Au Train, a Civilian Conservation Corp camp in Michigan's Hiawatha National Forest, as a case study to connect the everyday life of enrollees with dominant government narratives while including a focus on labor and the capitalist crisis of the Great Depression. Using the vantage point of work, play, study, and health, I integrate archaeological, historic, and photographic evidence to show contradictions between the enrollees' real lived experience and the dominant perspectives of the CCC 'authorities' who organized their lives. I argue that to interpret these contradictions, the CCC needs to be connected to the larger context of labor and capitalism. These insights are crucial for understanding contemporary calls for a New New Deal to address men's lost jobs and the 'crisis of masculinity' in order to make meaningful changes toward solving these real problems for the future.

# 1 Introduction

23rd Psalm as applied to CCC

The Top Sergeant is my shepherd and I am in dire want;

he preventeth me from lying down in my bed;

he leadeth me to distraction with his extra duty.

He shaketh my resolutions to get out of work;

he leadeth me to make a fool of myself before my fellow men.

Yea, though I sneak away until I am caught;

I fear much evil; for he is against me.

His policies, his threats, and his rantings frighteneth my wits from me.

He assigneth me extra work as punishment in the presence of mine enemies;

he anointeth my back with aches, and my hands runeth over with blisters.

Surely, threats, extra duty, and AWOL fines will follow me all the days of my CCC career and I will dwell in the house of fear forever.

-Wendell Genson: Round Lake Revelations, Co 3628, June 2, 1936

This enrollee's paraphrasing of scripture paints a vivid picture of his experience in the CCC. The Sergeant is the shepherd, always watching to make sure his sheep is working, doing the 'right' thing, and enacts punishment to 'lost sheep'. This enrollee worked until his back ached, his hands were one raw blister, and he was to the point where he will live forever in the house of fear. It is interesting to note that the shepherd is not on the side of the sheep in this Psalm. This quote paints a picture of the enrollee's experience of the CCC as fear, surveillance, humiliation, work, threats, control, discipline, and pain.

This enrollee's lived experience, expressed in a camp newsletter, is at odds with the way that we commonly think, remember, write, or talk about the CCC. This psalm does not reflect the patriotism, the saving of lost boys, or environmental conservation that figure so prominently in historical discussions of the program. Leaving out the CCC workers themselves means that the way that we talk about the New Deal and the Civilian Conservation Corps is often colored by the narratives set forth by the US Government, and these views get reproduced in present scholarship every time that historians rely on government documents and narratives that capture only one side of this moment of US history, and lose the gritty real concrete experiences of what it was like to be in the CCC.

Two of the dominant narratives that figure in the history of the CCC are the origin of the modern environmental conservation movement and aspects of masculinity, highlighting that the CCC was a program to turn 'lost boys' into men. These vantage points often coincide with the government's narrative of the CCC and leave the vantage point of the enrollees themselves, the underbelly of everyday life, unexamined. While the CCC is obviously about man-building and conservation, Wendell Genson's experience of the CCC as control, punishment, and hard physical labor is absent. The dominant historical narratives leave no wiggle room to show that it is about both, as well as labor, class, capitalism, and more. My goal is to examine the contradictions between these differing perspectives. To do so, I will need different sources of data as well as different theoretical tools.

In this thesis, I will use the data from Camp Au Train, a CCC camp in the Hiawatha National Forest, as a case study to help fill in these gaps– to connect the

everyday life of enrollees like Genson with the dominant narratives deriving from the government perspective, while including a focus on labor, capitalism, and the crisis of the Great Depression. Camp Au Train, designated Camp F-31 and Company 3607 was occupied from 1935 until 1941. Over this period, about 150 enrollees annually performed labor planting trees and in fire prevention, erosion and flood control, and wildlife management. Archaeological excavations have generated assemblages that represent a wide range of everyday behaviors. My goal is to use these archaeological materials in conjunction with historic evidence. My sources include over 8,000 artifacts from a Camp in the U.P. of Michigan, four different newsletters from the same camp, 5 issues of the regional newsletter, all of 1936's national CCC newsletter, and myriad secondary sources that talk about the New Deal and the CCC. These sources will allow for examination of the everyday life of enrollees, and my analysis focuses on the contradictions between the sources to interrogate the 'common sense' narratives that are often framed as conservation and man-building. My analysis is organized around how the CCC organized and promote the program: work, play, study, and health.

Combining all aspects of the CCC into a single whole requires new theoretical tools. I use a philosophy of internal relations that is based on dialectic totality in which everything is connected to a larger social whole, and ideology is connected to the material bases of people's lives. This theoretical framing is how I can connect the CCCs structure around work, play, study, and health, conservation, and man-building to larger relations of labor and capitalism. To examine the contradictions between the enrollees' lived experience, such as Gensons, and the dominant ideals of the CCC that are reproduced by scholars in the present, I also use the theoretical concept of the Ideological

State Apparatus. These two tools allow me to connect Genson's problems to the larger social whole but also put me in a position to bring this research into the present.

Our ability to see the everyday life of the enrollees and the larger context of the CCC connected to labor, masculinity, conservation, and capitalism is more relevant to the present than one might think. Contemporary capitalist restructuring has meant that men's jobs in the Global North are being lost on a massive scale. This situation harkens to the Great Depression and the nature of capitalism in general. This contemporary loss of work represents a crisis in capitalism, which, like the Great Depression, has widespread social consequences that have led some to call for a revival of New Deal programs to address the contemporary crisis. These solutions have been called, a New New Deal, a Green New Deal, or Economic Bills of Rights (Barbier 2010; Dean and Reynolds 2009; Felice 2010; Friedman, L. 2019; Friedman, T. 2019; Grunwald 2012, Williamson 2023). These contemporary calls to revive the CCC or New Deal programs make understanding the New Deal and the CCC in its social totality even more imperative.

The remainder of the thesis is organized as follows: Chapter 2 surveys the common ways that scholars talk about the CCC as well as a brief history of the New Deal to situate the CCC. I focus on the two themes that dominate the CCC literature: conservation and masculinity or 'man making.' Chapter 3 presents the theory, methods, and context for this study. It explains the theory of internal relations that I use to understand the CCC and the New Deal in a dialectic totality. My tools also include the concept of the ideological state apparatus, as well as arguments for a methodological focus on real lived experience. This same chapter also presents my data sources and the

methods I used to collect and organize the data around the CCCs focus on work, play, study, and health, as well as the background and context of Camp Au Train. The analysis presented in Chapter 4; is organized by the CCC's focus on Work, Play, Study, and Health. I examine the real lived experiences of enrollees like Genson and how it varies from the dominant perspectives of the CCC officers, New Deal administration, and 'authorities' who tried to organize the enrollees' lives. This allows me to lay bare the contradictions between the enrollees' experience and what the ideological state apparatus claims. Finally, the conclusion brings all these sections together and points out the importance of the real concrete in a dialectic approach rather than adopting surface appearances as facts. I then explore why it is important to have everyday life as a vantage point when examining the totality of these historic processes and put them into dialogue with the present-day calls for a New-New Deal, Green New Deal, and Economic Bill of Rights and the implications for the present.

# 2 The Great Depression and Historical Narratives of the CCC

Contemporary understandings of the New Deal and the Civilian Conservation Corps is often colored by the narratives set forth by the US Government and reproduced in present scholarship every time that historians rely on government documents and narratives that mainly capture one side of these moments of US history. This chapter presents the context of the New Deal from a more critical vantage point than that often produced. I follow this with a consideration of two of the dominant narratives that figure in the history of the CCC: conservation and turning lost boys into men. These vantage points often coincide with the government's narrative of the CCC and leave the vantage point of the enrollees themselves, the underbelly of everyday life, unexamined.

## 2.1 The Great Depression and the New Deal

The Great Depression of the 1930s was by far the worst slump capitalism had ever known (Harman 2009). People confronted a state of destitution and "fathomless pessimism" (Leuchtenburg 1963:26; Rose 2009:15). Unemployment soared in the US, and by 1933, 25 percent of workers were unemployed, and 37 percent of the industrial labor force were out of work (Rose 2009:13). In Michigan these numbers are even higher, with unemployment increasing to a staggering 46 percent by 1933 (Rubenstein and Ziewacz, 2014:232). It was not unusual that men who could no longer support their families resorted to the drastic act of suicide (Rose 2009:15). There seemed to be little hope for recovery. Each small glimpse of "economic upturn," such as that in the early fall of 1932, was subsequently crushed by a "fresh wave of panic" when 462 banks, about 1/10th of all banks in the US closed (Harman 2009; Hart and Mehrling 1995:58).

Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) took office during this turmoil in March 1933. He began his presidency with a stirring inaugural speech where he promised to devise a course of action to cope with the national emergency, foremost by getting people back to work (Dubofsky and McCartin 2017:223; Rose 2009:20). The lack of economic recovery and the intensity of the pressure forced Roosevelt to take more radical measures than he intended (Harman 2009) and his reforms went beyond any previous legislation. Zinn (1995:383) argues that FDR had two pressing needs. First, he had to overcome the crisis and stabilize capitalism for its own protection (see also Bernstein 1968; Leuchtenburg 1963). Second, he needed to staunch challenges to capitalism in the form of the spontaneous rebellions that were popping up across the country, such as organizations of tenants and the unemployed, self-help movements, and general strikes (Bernstein 1968). These protests were met with fear by those in power who were concerned by the first red scare following the rise of the USSR, and the dramatic increase of communist sympathizers the United States (Bernstein 1968:276; Luff 2012; Renshaw 1968, 1999).

In the face of the Depression, Roosevelt introduced programs mainly geared toward putting people to work and taking control of the economy. The suite of these programs was known as the New Deal. The National Recovery Act (NRA), the first major New Deal legislation, was a series of regulations that sought to bring management, labor, and the government together by fixing prices and wages and limiting competition. However, big businesses quickly dominated this law and twisted it to serve their interests (Bernstein 1968:269; Gordon 1994; Purcell 2006:21; Zinn 1995:383). The Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) was also passed in 1933. Farmers were in a perilous position; they faced a severe economic situation which were comparable to the problems of the

1890s Depression (Hurt 2002:67-68; Wurst and Ridarsky 2014). The AAA set out to reduce agricultural surpluses to increase prices in order to help farmers. To achieve this goal, the US government bought and slaughtered livestock and gave subsidies to farmers to not plant their lands. Just as the NRA became a tool for big businesses, the AAA favored large farms and farmers (Zinn 1995:383).

The second objective of FDR's New Deal was to stop rebellion. Some of these efforts were quite direct. Both the government and big business used the force of the National Guard, police, and hired strikebreakers to crush labor strikes (Zinn 1995:387-391, Rose 2009:17-18). For example, in 1934, 1.5 million workers in different industries on the West Coast went on strike. Police were mobilized to the strike, and the people resisted. Two of the workers on strike were killed by police, and the people's outrage brought more people to the strike. The situation escalated: 500 special police were sworn in, 4500 national guardsmen assembled, and infantry, machine guns, tanks, and artillery units swarmed the west coast to combat the "communist led rebellion" (Zinn 1995:387-391).

In Michigan industrial workers discontent with the economic situation played out in the form of sit-down strikes which became common in 1936 (Rubenstein and Ziewacz, 2014). These strikers locked themselves in the plants in the hope that they would be safer since management would be reluctant to hurt the machines as collateral damage if they were forced out. Michigan's auto industry experienced many of these strike activities. For example, on December 30, 1936, 5000 workers at Flint's General Motors (GM) Chevrolet plant started a sit-down strike, fighting for the recognition of the United

Autoworkers Union, minimum wage, limiting maximum work hours, and ending "speedup" production (Fine 1969; Rubenstein and Ziewacz, 2014; West 1986). Corporate officials refused to negotiate and asked Governor Murphy to immediately dispatch troops to evict the strikers. The governor refused and corporate officials ordered the Flint police to storm the plants and take them back by force. This was called the "Battle of the Running Bulls" and resulted in the injury of fourteen workers and twelve policemen. After this battle the governor relented and sent 4000 Michigan National Guard troops to aid the 1000 deputized vigilantes and the Flint police who surrounded the strikers. GM cut off the heat and electricity to the plants to freeze the strikers out. Town officials called for the police to attack but on February 11, GM surrendered, ending the strike, granting the workers UAW representation. This is just one example of the many incidents of social unrest in Michigan and across the country at this time and highlights that "saving capitalism" required addressing this unrest (Bernstein 2010; Fraser 2010; Rubenstein and Ziewacz 2014; West 1986; Zeiger 1995; Zinn 1995:387-391).

FDR's two goals of stabilizing the economy and stopping rebellion came together in the series of work programs the New Deal is best known. The Works Projects Administration (WPA) was created in May of 1935. This program employed millions of job-seeking men who worked on public projects such as constructing buildings, parks, and roads (Rose 2009). Roughly 3 million people were employed by the WPA in 1938. The workers of this program built more than 600,000 miles of streets as well as 10,000 bridges, airports, and houses. Writers, actors, artists, media, and other arts professionals were also employed through the WPA. They put on 225,000 theatrical and music performances. Even archaeologists were employed through the program. However, the

main goal of the WPA was not to provide full employment for all but rather to supply one job for all families where the breadwinner was unemployed for a long period of time (Leigninger 2007:64,184).

But these benefits did not come without any strings. The unemployed who received help in Michigan were forbidden from voting and required to sign paupers' oaths. Some counties went so far as to propose that all American relief recipients be sterilized (Rubenstein and Ziewacz, 2014:232).

## 2.2 The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)

Unlike the WPA, which focused on relief for married male breadwinners, the CCC was a works program that targeted young, single, men. The Emergency Conservation Work Act of 1933 that authorized the CCC emphasized manual labor in conservation work so it would not compete with labor or business. Initially, the CCC employed young single men aged 18 through 25 so they would not compete for the same jobs as married men put to work through the WPA. Thus, the structure of these different New Deal programs privileged married male workers while keeping young people out of the labor market (Hine 1999:4). By 1935, the corps expanded this age limit to 17 to 28-year-olds. Enrollees enlisted for 6-month stints during which they would live in rural, military-run camps where they spent their time planting trees and other general conservation work. They were paid $30 per month, but $25 was sent directly to their family at home (Alexander 2018; Maher 2008; River 2019).

Even though they targeted different populations, the WPA and CCC shared the goal of dealing with unemployment to address social unrest. Putting young men to work

was especially important since they were considered the greatest risk for social rebellion. This idea is clearly stated in Dorothy Thompson's 1940 article "The Problem of Youth" published in the *Ladies Home Journal*. She states that a society that "does not need its youth it will be destroyed by that youth" (cited in Williams 1940:14). This danger posed by unemployed youths was the reason for the creation of the CCC.

The CCC was also touted as a way to get urban 'delinquent' men off the streets (Maher 2008:18). Men caught by the police were given the 'choice' to join the CCC or go to prison (Alexander 2018:39; Maher 2008), an attempt to reform the 'delinquent youth of the city' (Alexander 2018; Gorham 1992:233; Maher 2008:18; River 2018:2; Suzik 2005) before they made it to the prison cell. This idea is evident in an article titled "The CCC a Check Against Prisons" that was printed in the August 1936 edition of the *Northlander*, Michigan's Fort Brady District CCC newsletter. According to this article, the CCC saved these men from prison by removing them from the streets and taking them to healthy surroundings where they could learn the essence of being a good worker and steer them away from crime. All these measures helped ensure that social unrest was muted.

It is ironic that the CCC was specifically structured so that the labor of young men was diverted from standard ideas of employment. Hine states that "for most of our history, the labor of young people in their teens was too important to be sacrificed" (Hine 1999:5). From the vantage point of labor, 'sacrifice" is exactly what the CCC did. As Williams states:

> If the depression has brought out anything, it has proved that during times of distress, youth, since he is on the bottom of the economic heap, must accept work that does not suit him, work that he does not like, work for which he has had no training. (Williams 1940:14)

These young men needed to have work but were actively being denied a role in the labor force or steered to jobs that did not suit them and that they did not like, a situation that undoubtably fostered resentment. The looming unemployment, 25 percent nationally and a staggering 46 percent in Michigan hit these young men hard. They were in a precarious position since ‘teenagers’ were denied other forms of New Deal relief. The CCC was a ‘choice’ for them where there are not many other options.

The first CCC camps appeared in April, and by July, the CCC had 275,000 enrollees and 1,300 camps across the United States. Over the nine years that the CCC was active, over 3 million young men were put to work. The CCC attempted to control almost all aspects of the enrollee's life to transform them into productive men. The U.S. Army oversaw the daily administration of CCC camps and ran them in a regimented way, emphasizing physical labor, discipline, educational programs, camp overhead duties, and sanitation and hygiene. Figure 1. is a poster used to promote the CCC as a Young Man’s Opportunity highlighting that the program is about Work, Play, Study, and Health. The structure of the CCC program integrated aspects of work, play, study, and health in order to discipline the enrollees' bodies and minds (Figure 1) (Gorham 1992:232).


Figure 1:CCC poster produced by the WPA of Illinois. (United States Library of Congress's Prints and Photographs division, digital ID ppmsca.12896).

The enrollees performed physically demanding labor in 40-hour weeks that would transform their bodies by adding muscle while simultaneously conditioning their minds to the discipline and time management necessary for capitalist labor (Gorham 1992;

Montgomery 1979; Shakel 2009:20; Thompson 1967). Some of the work these young men performed included forest conservation, road building, and construction, mainly concentrated in rural areas.

Evidence from Camp Au Train suggests many men came from the Detroit area, removing them from their family and social relations isolating them in the back woods. The removal of these youth from cities could be interpreted as an intentional effort to keep the desperate and rebellious out of trouble. Mattick makes this clear when he states:

> Actually, of course, the Administration was moved by more practical motives. First, it was realized these youngsters, jobless and confronted with the ever-mounting misery prevailing in their homes, constituted a potential menace to Society. By draining off these, potentially, most militant elements into the C.C.C. that danger might be averted and the working class, as a whole, thereby weakened (Mattick 1935:1).

The enrollees were paid for their labor, which allowed a foretaste of their future societal role of breadwinner and wage laborer. Even though these young men were paid a wage of $30 a month, they were allowed to only keep $5 for themselves. This payment structure reinforced that these young men were not ‘real’ workers, key to the idea of ‘teenagers’ as a separate group (Hine 1999) that did not require equal pay for equal work.

In addition to work, the CCC camps had formal leisure activities that revolved around sports and education. These activities reinforced aspects of competition and skill acquisition that could ensure their future employability (Kimmel 1997). Boys were expected to eat enough food to put on weight as they transformed their bodies from weak boys to men. Men were also supposed to attend to hygiene and physical appearance and know basic social manners. Since 'work, play, study, and health' were the most important

aspects of the CCC's goals, I will use them to organize my analysis of the everyday lives of the enrollees.

Scholars have devoted a great deal of effort researching the CCC, but most can be grouped as falling into one of two different narratives. One group of scholars emphasizes the role of the CCC in the origins of the American conservation movement, while the other highlights the CCC as a 'man-building' program that 'saved our sons' during the Depression. In what follows, I will discuss the literature on the CCC based on these two different dominant narratives.

## 2.3 Conservation

One of the overarching themes from secondary sources on the CCC is the creation of the modern conservation movement (Alexander 2018; Butler 2006; Maher 2008; The Mitten 2003; Todd 1935). These sources point out how instrumental the CCC was to the idea of conservation and efforts to save the US wilderness. This conservation argument is usually framed in a cause-and-effect way. The cause was the devastation to nature wrought by the timber industry and farms, and the CCC has been presented as the solution to the problem. The authors then examine how the CCC improved and protected nature and farmlands. These arguments focus on the top-down government policy and the mutually constitutive ideological justification. To make these top-down perspectives more balanced there is occasionally an anecdote or quote from an enrollee. This provides the basis to frame the CCC as a concrete 'thing' that's main goal was conservation. This approach leaves conservation in isolation and never brings it back into a holistic social picture.

Researchers who emphasize conservation adopt the US Government's story that the CCC was created to improve and rehabilitate nature and humans. All of these sources situate the CCC in terms of its relation to the forest and the timber famines that were around at the time of the Depression (Alexander 2018:4-5; Maher 2008: 7,48-49; The Mitten 2003:1; Todd 1935: 152-153). This argument is an active step in 'finding the origin' of conservation that is so important in the modern US. The issue that they see is the timber famines, and it is in these famines caused by poor work practices that created space where the CCC had to be created. In the cause-and-effect framing, the cause is deforestation, and the effect is the creation of the CCC. The logging industry of the late 1800s and early 1900s receives a large portion of the blame for the destruction of the national wealth of future generations. The amelioration of this degradation became the ideological justification for the Corps that these authors adopt in their writings. These authors closely follow the lead of Robert Fechner, the first CCC director, who stated that the Corps quickly became associated with one resource in particular: the nation's national forests (Maher 2008:48). Fechner also referred to the law that constituted the CCC as "the reforestation and relief bill," "the president's reforestation program," and to the enrollees as "young forest workers… a vast forest army" (Maher 2008:48). Director Fechner and FDR's claims about the CCC as a conservation program were reinforced by the media and gave it the name commonly used today: "Roosevelt's Tree Army" (Maher 2008:49; River 2018:3).

There are two more ways that these authors use conservation as their lens for examining the CCC: dealing with issues about soils and soil fertility and the impact that nature has on human health. The loss of soil fertility is an 'effect' of deforestation and

poor farm practices, most dramatic in the Dust Bowl. Because of poor farm management, the CCC's conservation goals were expanded from reforestation to include the improvement of farmlands. The government blamed farmers who did not understand how to manage their land, wasted soil fertility with mono-cropping, and did not use irrigation properly (Wurst and Ridarsky 2014). Their poor management led to the degradation of the soils across the United States (River 2018:4). To combat and improve the conditions of poor farm management, CCC enrollees were sent to private farms to plant trees, shrubs, and grasses to stabilize the soil (Alexander 2018:70). In order to improve the potential for farmers' lands, the Corp was also tasked with the creation of irrigation systems. These CCC men diverted streams and ditches and created irrigation terraces to hold rainwater. If farmland had too much water, the CCC would create dams to stop water flow. The CCC did all of this work on private farms in the interest of "larger regional conservation" (Alexander 2018:70).

FDR is known for his attempts to extract the most value from the land, and farmland was always part of this maximum land extraction (Maher 2008). When Roosevelt was still a senator in New York State, he pushed for the scientific management of the farmlands and conservation to generate profit. As Maher (2008:28) states,

> Roosevelt noted the alarming rate of farm abandonment throughout the state [New York] and proposed a solution that reiterated his utilitarian notion of natural resources. Every acre of rural land in the state should be used only for that purpose for which it is best fitted and out of which the greatest economic return can be derived. New York's constitution authorized the state to purchase abandoned farmland, reforest it, and scientifically manage it as production forest.

FDR's utilitarian ideas of scientific management or improvement of farmland developed as a New York Senator, were deployed in the CCC and framed as soil management and, in a more general sense, conservation. The connection between FDR and the use of conservation as a profit-generation method is taken a step further when another New Deal program, the Resettlement Administration, is introduced into the mix, and we see conservation masquerading as the savior of farmers.

The stated goals of the Resettlement Administration were "saving farms" and families "stranded on sub-marginal farms" and ending the disastrous wastage of people and natural resources" (Wurst and Ridarsky 2014:226). The program allocated money to purchase submarginal farms on old, worn-out land and to relocate the farm families to land better suited to agricultural production. These goals align with the CCC's conservation work and FDR's focus on utilitarian, scientific management. Seen in isolation from this larger social whole, the CCC appears simply as a program for conservation work for conservation's sake. When seen in the larger context of the scientific management of land, the CCC starts to look less like an isolated example of the origins of conservation.

Scholars that emphasize conservation also link this to human conservation and the prevention of human waste. Maher points out the CCC had a double view of this human waste. While urban environments were seen as the 'cause' of the problems that we see in the Great Depression, hard outdoor labor was seen as a possible cure for the rot that is the failure of civilization. The urban environments were faulted for breeding people who were unhealthy, either spiritually or physically. Maher (2008:60) points out that the

sentiments of the mid 1930s were that the entire nation was under threat from the ailments that stemmed from earth disease (Maher 2008:60). This earth disease was seeping into the youth of urban America and was associated with a rise in juvenile delinquency during the early years of the Depression, as some newspapers report. FDR thought that working-class families were in danger since their boys lived in crowded conditions and their normal, natural growth was threatened. Nature and the countryside were seen as a cure for the problems affecting urban youth (Maher 2008:35). This is the argument that FDR used to push for the CCC program in Congress. He would move a vast army of these unemployed young men out of the cities and into healthful surroundings. Roosevelt, the conservationist, saw that the countryside's natural resources were in dire need of scientific management, and the unemployment reformer in him believed that the countryside was potentially rejuvenating for urban youth (Maher 2008:29).

Roosevelt was well aware that his anti-urban pro-rural rhetoric appealed to both the political left and right (Maher 2008:31) and allowed him to secure the CCC's creation and made it one of the most popular New Deal programs. Unemployed Americans wanted nothing more than the chance to work. FDR stated, "We can take a vast army of these unemployed out into healthful surroundings. We can eliminate to some extent at least the threat that enforced idleness brings to spiritual and moral stability" (Alexander 2018:16-17; see also Maher 2008:19; Libbon 2011:15; Rivers 2018:6; Todd 1935:153).

Working outdoors would transform unemployed city dwellers into rugged individuals, a form of 'individual conservation.' The physical and ideological changes

converted the CCC men to the conservation cause (Maher 2008:12-13). Taking young men away from their urban homes to healthy surroundings and teaching them to work was all part of the active Corps' agenda. It was thought that by putting these young men to work and saving them spiritually and morally, they would not become 'human waste' (Yates 2011). Even so, the focus on conservation ignores or downplays the question of labor, and these scholars tend to uncritically adopt the official narrative of the CCC. They leave no way to understand the CCC except as a response to deforestation and the origin of conservation. It assumes that the CCC was created with only conservation in mind, and this conservation is the *raison d'etre* for the CCC. Even though Maher states that there were issues with how the CCC did conservation, his work leaves little room to understand the CCC program as anything other than about conservation.

The primary issue that gets lost in the shadow of the CCC as conservation that the program was set up with the express plan that CCC work could not interfere with private industry. As FDR stated, the young men would "be used in simple work, not interfering with normal employment and confining itself to forestry, the prevention of soil erosion, flood control and similar projects" (Maher 2008:20 Pasquill Jr. 2008:1). While Maher includes this quote, he focuses on the second portion and ignores the relation between the CCC and private industry, leaving the idea that the CCC was, above all, for conservation.

## 2.4 Manhood

Scholars have also emphasized the concept of man-building in their research and publications about the CCC. One needs to look no further than their book titles to see just how important masculinity was to the program. For example, titles like *Saving our Sons:*

*How the Civilian Conservation Corps Rescued a Generation of Upper Michigan Men* (Chabot 2009), *Building Better Men* (Suzik 2005), and *Now They are Men* (McEntee 1940) are common in the CCC literature. Authors that focus on masculinity often claim that the CCC saved a whole generation of lost boys as well as providing a necessary step for dealing with the Depression (Apps 2019; Chabot 2009; Kolvet and Ford 2006; Salmond 1967). Kolvet and Ford argue that "FDR's overriding goal was to provide hope for discouraged Americans; the main goal of his CCC program was to save a generation of unmarried young men" (Kolvet and Ford 2006:146). They argue that the CCC transformed the enrollees from weak boys who never had a job into men who could contribute to the US economy.

Scholars who adopt the narrative of CCC as man-building make three different related arguments: men should work and make money, men need to have worthy leisure time, and men need to improve their bodies. The CCC intentionally promoted these camps as places where boys could achieve manhood through these different avenues, and scholars have adopted this rhetoric in their investigations. However, as Suzik points out this adoption leads to an oversimplified view of the New Deal program.

Man-building aspects of the CCC occurred in the context of the capitalist crisis of the 1930s when men could no longer work. The ideology of masculinity during the 1930s defined men by their ability to work, make money, and provide for their families. Since these young men were unemployed, they could not provide for their families and could never become "real men" (Maher 2008:95; River 2018:23; Suzik 2005:22). McEntee, the second director of the CCC, questioned the enrollee's masculinity since many of them

had never worked before entering the Corps. He argued that they would never become capable men if they were unemployed, at home, supported by their fathers' meager earnings or relief allowances (McEntee 1940). The threat that these boys lacked the ability to work and make money, to be a real man, became a major ideological point that the CCC used to justify the program.

Since the enrollees were dismissed as not 'real men' before entering the Corps, they get classified as an 'other.' Suzik (2005:25-27) describes this precarious situation as "sissification" (see also: Johnson 2007; Lugowski 1999). Sissification is when boys depend on another person, show fear, lack initiative, and are passive. No boy is born a sissy, but they could become a sissy without independence and self-reliance; in other words, the hallmarks of masculinity. During the Depression, the US needed to help transition boys into manhood using means that would not interfere with the 'real men' who had families and needed 'real man's work' or normal employment (Maher 2008:78-79; Rivers 2018:5 see also: Pasquill Jr. 2008:72). This sense of masculinity and the excluded 'other' of sissy, parallel ideas of the 'teenager' that created a separate category based on age.

The CCC adopted this rhetoric, framing their conservation work as a steppingstone to transform boys into men. Inexperienced boys were trained through labor to be productive men (Baldridge 2019:17) and take their "place in American society as a competent, upstanding adult male citizen" (Suzik 2005:8; see also Apps 2019; Kolvet and Ford 2006). The US government intentionally created these CCC jobs not to compete with capitalist production during the Depression. Even though the work was not essential,

the program attempted to instill capitalist work discipline into this pool of unemployed men.

Youth unemployment was seen as a major issue for the country's stability. A commonly held notion was that these urban boys were turning to lives of crime and that the CCC saved them from this fate:

> The CCC transformed the lives of many young men who were dangerously close to embracing a life of crime. It gave them work to do and taught them skills that they could use later in their workplaces. It also made them appreciate and become stewards to the land (River 2018).

These youth challenged the world they were a part of, and this challenge is one of the reasons the government created the CCC by removing the threat of 'criminals' from the cities where they lived, taking them to the forests away from home, and giving them disciplined and structured work. The government justified its involvement in creating the CCC to quell the masses of unemployed boys by stating that "men's labor" is "an inalienable right to be protected, if necessary, by federal action" (Maher 2008:82-83). FDR believed that male youths joining the CCC could become full-fledged workers once the economy improved.

These fears of unemployment also concerned the CCC enrollees themselves. New enrollees blamed joblessness in particular for sapping much of their corporeal strength (Maher 2008:92). This sentiment of men's right to labor and the building of men was part of the ideology during the crisis in capitalism during the Depression. These ideas diverted

attention away from capitalism and its failings and focused on ideas of what a man should be and how to make them. The CCC was just a work program that created men.

Leisure time and productive leisure were considered just as important as work for transforming boys to men. This idea takes many forms in the secondary literature, including emphasis on education, sports, camp beautification, visiting town, and courting women. Education might be one of the most important narratives used by the CCC regarding the creation of men. Suzik (2005:214) states this clearly:

> If the CCC was going to make a full commitment to training and rehabilitating America's working-class boys, as it claimed to be doing in all of its promotional material, then it would need to scarp its existing program and expand its camps' educational activities many fold."

The CCC's education programs taught the boys job skills and ways to understand the world. Education as job skills is a direct link to the idea that work defines 'real men.' Men need to be able to make money to support their families, and this education was focused on making them better candidates for jobs after they left the CCC so they would be able to merge into society as better, stronger men, ready to contribute to society. This use of education as productive leisure time was key to building better workers and men.

Another way leisure time and man-building go together in secondhand sources is via sports. Organized sports allowed men to develop their competitive and aggressive 'nature,' essential features of masculinity. Sports allowed these boys to work out aggression and settle problems with other enrollees. Boxing is a prime example of a sport that addresses both, and it figures prominently in secondhand sources examination of the

CCC. Boxing also connects with enrollees' informal hazing, a behavior modification tool used to shape each other into men (Alexander 2018:99). Enrollees tried to impose a particular type of masculinity through horizontal violence. This horizontal violence (when the dominant ideology is internalized and has someone striking out at a fellow) (Freire 2005:62), justified enrollee on enrollee policing, and gets very little attention in the secondary sources. If these concepts are approached in any way it is discussed as natural or just "boys being boys."

The final way the CCC tried to transform boys into men is through physical bodily development. The CCC claimed that the outdoor work would make enrollees stronger as they developed a tan and rebuilt their bodies. As Maher (2008:96) argues, "the CCCs most important curative for the sickly bodies flooding into the Corps, however, was work in nature." Before joining the CCC, enrollee's underdeveloped bodies led many young men to question their masculinity (Maher 2008:93). In light of this physical 'failure,' the CCC played an active role in turning youth into men. This 'body politic' is an adoption of the dominant ideology, where once weak males could achieve manhood and feel good about their actions, and any failure could be blamed on a boy's own failure.

Weight became the de facto way everyone measures the CCC bodybuilding success. Almost every book you pick up will tell you about the weight CCC boys put on during their stay at camp (Alexander 2018:97; Chabot 2009:7; Maher 2008:99-100; River 2018:7; Todd 1935:154). The average man gained about 8-10 pounds. It is in this weight gain that manhood was achieved since it assumes that men who put on massive amounts

of muscle were fed well and hardier. Todd (1935:154) explains this transformation: "The men grew in weight, in strength, in ability to work and to work together, and a certain civic awareness which is fundamental to good citizenship." Todd associates weight gain with the strength and ability to work, again connecting masculinity to physical bodies and breadwinning. Suzik (2005:51) makes the same point:

> Official publicity statements lauded physical conditioning, muscle-hardening, and weight gains as some of the most crucial man-building aspects of the program, ... Administrators and the program's publicists stuck to the two other earmarks that markedly defined depression-era manliness: strong physical and vocational aptitudes that would allow one to be economically independent.

He draws the connection between the body and the ability to work and be economically independent and makes it clear that these ideas stem from state propaganda. Success measured by putting on weight is how the CCC is remembered in the present, as 'saving a whole generation of boys.

Bodily control through health is another way that manhood was achieved by the CCC. Maher (2008), Suzik (2005), and Alexander (2018) all claim that it was not uncommon for men to discipline each other for not being clean or healthy. According to Suzik (2005:98) "unclean bodies and slovenly living areas made for rather unpleasant conditions in general, and the boys regularly took matters into their own hands." He recounts examples of "boys who weren't very clean were thrown by their bunk mates into the showers" and sometimes they literally tied unhygienic enrollees into the shower to uphold standards of cleanliness and grooming.

These sentiments mimic what it meant to be hygienic from the camp authorities' perspective. This can be seen in the July 1936 issue of the *Northlander* where camp Educational Advisor J. A. Wolkenhauer writes about "Personal Appearance." Wolkenhauer says, "As required by regulation, each enrollee should always present a neat and orderly appearance." He goes on to say that in the CCC, maintaining proper, neat and clean attire at all times is what makes a man. However, if the individual is "slipshod," they will end up with a "slipshod" job, and that will lead to a life of unhappiness. A May 1937 *Northlander* article labeled "Your Health" written by the chief medical officer of the 3626th CCC company, J.R. Franco discusses most the beneficial hygienic measures for "an enrollee's future well-being (Franco 1937)." He includes how enrollees should be vigilant for colds and need to get checked early and often. Enrollees should follow the treatments that their doctors prescribe and note that pimples and blackheads can be treated by a change in diet, that enrollees should be careful if they pick at them since it can introduce bacteria to the body. While he presents some very specific information, he makes it is clear that bodily control, maintenance, and upkeep is paramount to the future success of the enrollee.

The idea of 'saving men' and aspects of masculinity were an important part of the CCC. Through education and job training, sports, and other leisure activities that developed competitive instincts, and improvement to men's physical bodies, the CCC is credited for building the men "who shaped the world that we live in today" (Libbon 2011:116-117).

## 2.5 Summary and Conclusions

The historical research summarized here has provided important understandings of the CCC in terms of the development of the conservation movement and aspects of 1930s masculinity. Each of these groups of scholars tends to look at aspects of the CCC in isolation, explaining that the CCC is either about conservation or masculinity. While these works situate the CCC within the New Deal and the Great Depression, they are seldom framed within the context of capitalism and capitalist crises. These approaches leave capitalism untouched and provide no way for us to understand the New Deal outside of the propaganda produced by the government.

Most of the information used by scholars of the CCC are official government sources. Like scholars of other New Deal programs, they focus on the policy, programs, leadership, and goals (Gilbert 1996, 2000, 2003, 2008, 2009; Gilbert and Howe 1991; Kirkendall 1966; Saloutos 1982). These official 'top-down' sources are supplemented with personal anecdotes that add just a sprinkle of everyday life to make it appear as if they have captured the enrollee's perspective. It is not surprising, then, that these works often coincide with dominant narratives used by the US government. As Wurst and Ridarsky (2014:226) argue, "New Deal scholars tend to emphasize the rhetoric rather than the actual results and to evaluate the policies based on a national scale level of abstraction that misses the contradictions inherent in local dynamics." Suzik echoes this sentiment when he says that "understanding the actual lived experiences of CCC enrollees- both the good and the bad help paint a richer and more honest picture of the working-class boys' lives" (Suzik 2005:14). Authors weave in the commonsense assumptions they derive from their evidence and are often uncritical of the narratives they

borrow. It does not mean that these observations are wrong, but they do focus our gaze on the position of the state. As the larger critical perspectives of the Great Depression and New Deal offered by Zinn (1995), Harman (2009), and Wurst and Ridarsky (2014) show, understanding the New Deal, including the CCC, has to be situated within larger contexts of capitalism and crises. Even though historians have emphasized conservation and masculinity, both underemphasize aspects of the CCC from the vantage point of work and labor.

We need a different way to examine these work camps that connects the larger whole of capitalism to the lived experience of the enrollees in these camps. This approach needs to maintain the insights of previous research on the nature of conservation and masculinity while providing a critical stance on the nature of evidence provided by the government. A Marxist dialectical theory allows me to approach this body of literature from a different vantage point that helps with the problems that arise by looking at the CCC in terms of isolated roles that explain "what the CCC is." In the next chapter, I will explain this theoretical and methodological framework and discuss how and why this Marxist tradition allows me to see the contradictions between the commonsense ways of knowing the CCC and the real lived experience of the enrollees.

# 3 Theory, Methods, and Camp Au Train

## 3.1 Theory

In the last chapter, I looked at the two common ways that the CCC is talked about, as either man-building and masculinity or conservation. In the process, I laid bare two issues that appear in the ways that researchers talk about the Civilian Conservation Corps. First was the adoption of the dominant ideology, and the second was looking at issues in isolation, as external relations or what Sayers (1987) refers to as the "violence of abstraction." When we look at these issues in isolation and leave them as isolated matters, we lose any critical understanding of what happened in these camps. In other words, once either man-building or conservation is violently abstracted from the totality, these narratives frame the understanding of the CCC and leave no wiggle room to show that it is about both, as well as labor, class, capitalism, and more. In order to move beyond these violent abstractions, I needed different tools to understand the CCC than what the common sense 'either/or' or 'cause/effect' explanations provide. I found these tools in the form of the Marxist Dialectic.

Ollman (2003, 2015) argues that Marx used a philosophy of internal relations to organize his understanding of capitalism. A philosophy of internal relations puts forth that society is made up of dialectical relations, which are the aspects of life that create the surface appearances. These surface appearances, whether class, economy, masculinity, conservation or economy are not 'things' that exist for their own sake. These relations can never exist apart from the internal larger web of social totality. Thus, there is no such 'thing' as the economy or political system; instead, they are a web of dialectically related social relations that create the surface appearances of these 'things.' This point to move

away from ‘things’ is important to recognize. It moves away from the stagnation in common sense ‘cause and effect’ thinking where one entity impacts another and into an ever-evolving relationship that changes over time where the change happens internal to the social relations. The commonsense way we think about ‘things’ (external relations) becomes just one snapshot in a philosophy of internal relations, a vantage point to examine and understand an internal relation at a given point in time.

Because they are internal, dialectical relations unite opposites that are always contradictory. Instead of being separate, these opposites, for example, capitalist-worker, slave-owner, agriculture-industry, etc., are seen as internally constituted wholes. These entities exist in different material conditions and have different interests; therefore, dialectical relations unite opposites that are always contradictory. It is in the contradictions internal to the relations where the conflict is born.

Dialectical research emphasizes social totality since everything is internally related and thus all part of the same ‘thing.’ (Dézsi and Wurst in press:203; Wurst and O’Donovan 2008:1448). This focus on totality means that all the separate ‘things’ that structure social scientific research, such as conservation, masculinity, the economy, etc., are in fact, all brought together into an internally-related social totality. All of these separate ‘things’ integrate the material base and ideological superstructure into a single whole.

The fact that all of social reality is internally related into a single whole has real methodological implications for any research, and real-lived experience is the lynchpin for dialectical research. As Marx famously stated,

> The premises from which we begin are not arbitrary ones, not dogmas, but real premises from which abstraction can only be made in the imagination. They are the real individuals, their activity and the material conditions under which they live, both those which they find already existing and those produced by their activity. These premises can thus be verified in a purely empirical way." (Marx and Engels 1970:42)

Marx began his investigations, not with arbitrary, abstract concepts, but with real individuals and their activities. This would imply that if we want to understand the CCC, we must begin with the everyday life of the enrollees. Their experience was conditioned by the ideological structure imposed by the state, implemented in the camps through the Army and Forest Service, framed by New Deal policy, and affected by the crisis of capitalism. The CCC exists in a complex web of social relations and can only be understood as such. The issues of masculinity, conservation, government intervention, the crisis of overproduction that we call the Great Depression, and labor, often treated in isolation, are all part of the same dialectical whole that makes the totality.

The implication of this is that any form of data can inform on the social relations of this social totality. Marxist archaeologists focus on different sources of data to move away from surface appearances to understand the totality of the web of social relations. It is by examining multiple lines of evidence, such as material artifacts, historic sources, and spatial data, at different scales, such as local, regional, and national, that we can see the anomalies, paradoxes, and contradictions (O'Donovan, Wurst, and McGuire 2012). In the context of the CCC, these scales include the everyday life of Camp Au Train and the surrounding area, the regional scale of Michigan that includes the enrollee's home, the

national scale of the New Deal and government programs and policy and how they were justified, and the global scale of the crisis of capitalism. Through archaeological data, we can examine the relationships and contradictions between the lived experience/material conditions of the CCC inhabitants (McGuire 2014:261). Archaeology can take that real lived day-to-day materiality and add it to the other lines of evidence, such as historic documents, to lay bare the contradictions that may arise in the data sources (O'Donovan, Wurst, and McGuire 2012; Wurst and O'Donovan 2008:1449).

Most of the sources of evidence that other researchers have used to understand the CCC are the laws, policy, and implementation protocols of New Deal programs. These sources indicate that we need to think about ideology and the role of the state before we can evaluate these sources. From the perspective of a Marxist dialectical approach, ideology is not just ideas floating in the void but is dialectically related to people's real lived experience. As Eagleton states, ideology "is never otherworldly or idly disconnected thought, it must figure as an organizing social force which actively constitutes human subjects at the roots of their lived experience and seeks to equip them with forms of value and belief relevant to their specific social tasks and to the general reproduction of the social order" (Eagleton 1991:222-223). The ideas of enrollees based on their real lived experience may contradict the 'dominant ideal' of the CCC.

Examining the contradictions between the enrollees and the dominant ideals of the CCC links to issues related to the state's role in ideology. Althusser (1970) presents a powerful way to understand the role of the state in his discussion of *Ideological State Apparatuses*. For Althusser, the state is not positioned outside of capitalism but plays an

important role to reproduce the conditions of production. According to Althusser, the state achieves the goal of reproducing the means of production in two ways. The first is through Ideological State Apparatuses, including religion, schools, family, etc., that function primarily to ensure the reproduction of the relations of production. The second mechanism is what he calls the Repressive State Apparatus, entities of the government, such as the army, courts, prisons, police, etc., that use force and violence as their main function to repress the working class, although they also function ideologically.

Following Althusser, we can see the CCC as a state organization that exists to reproduce the conditions of production and serve capital by reproducing labor power. The enrollees learned to read, write, job skills and techniques, and scientific and literary culture, which are directly useful to future jobs (Althusser 1970:4). In other words, these young men learned the 'know-how' to be good laborers in the capitalist system. At the same time, they were taught the 'rules,' attitudes, morals, and professional conscience needed to reproduce labor's submission to capital. Althusser frames this combination of 'know-how' and 'rules' as *a sine qua non* of Ideological State Apparatuses. He argues that it is through state agencies, such as the CCC, that the skills to reproduce the self as a laborer and the reproduction of the subjugation of the worker to the ruling ideology takes place. The CCC was entwined with all of the forms of the repressive state apparatus. CCC men were given a choice when caught by the police to join the CCC or go to prison (Alexander 2018:39, Maher 2008) to reform the 'delinquent youth of the city' (Alexander 2018; Maher 2008:18; River 2018:2; Suzik 2005). If they 'chose' to join the CCC, they would then be entering the environment where the army, another repressive state apparatus, would control their lives for the six-month stints that they could serve.

A dialectical theory based on internal relations is antithetical to the commonsense way that the CCC is talked about. As we saw in Chapter 2, most scholars focus on either conservation or masculinities, defined as concrete issues that interact with each other but are seen as separate external relations. We are given a 'choice' of which issue best explains the CCC. The picture becomes, as conservation group say, the CCC is about conservation, or as the masculinity group say, the CCC is about manhood. None of these authors are wrong, but by focusing on these separate issues, they provide an incomplete picture of the CCC. The theory of internal relations emphasizing social totality helps us see that conservation and masculinity are essential parts of the same internally related whole. It is the combined relations of masculinities, conservation, labor, class, etc. that create the dialectical whole of the CCC. The CCC cannot be divorced or violently abstracted from this larger dialectical whole or the picture is incomplete. A theory of internal relations that emphasizes the totality of social relations, multiple lines of evidence, and the focus on everyday life provides a different vantage point to understand the CCC.

## 3.2 Methods

A theory of internal relations is based on beginning with a focus on the 'real concrete' and everyday life of the enrollees and using multiple sources of data to look for contradictions between the different sources. The data I use for this analysis comes from the archaeological excavation of CCC-era features at Camp Au Train, the spatial patterning of the site based on survey and GIS data, historic photographs, newsletters from Camp Au Train and the Fort Brady District, and oral histories. These sources are

used in conjunction with government statements and documents that are presented in the published historical sources reviewed in the previous chapter.

## 3.3 Archaeology

The data that figures in my analysis was collected through three stages of archaeological investigation at Camp Au Train. Preliminary work to map the site and assess its research potential occurred during a weekend in May 2018. In October 2018, a group of Michigan Tech Graduate students excavated two trash pits next to the education building. Finally, a week-long Passport in Time program had 15 volunteers and personnel from Michigan Tech and the Hiawatha National Forest Service excavate 5 trash pits, only one of which dated to the CCC occupation.

A total of three features date to the CCC period: Features 6A, 6D, and 23. Feature 6A and 6D are located next to the education building and Feature 23 is near the firebreak to the northwest of the camp (Figure 2). One other feature dating to the CCC occupation was excavated, but it has a very complicated history. Feature 40, located to the far north of the camp, is shown in the 1939 aerial image, so it was in use during this period. However, the artifacts recovered from this feature date to the POW occupation. It appears to be a special-purpose ash dumping area that was later re-used as a trash pit. The feature itself figures into my analysis, but I do not use any of the artifacts since they do not date to the CCC period. Specific details about the excavation of these features are provided by Maze (2023).

All artifacts collected from these excavations were washed, dried, and re-bagged at the MTU archaeology lab. Artifacts were cataloged according to a non-hierarchical

catalog system. The system, in part, utilizes a modification of South's artifact classification (South 1978): each artifact was classified by functional group (Kitchen, architectural, personal, smoking, etc.), as well as to a specific type attribute (e.g. nail, bottle, food preparation, etc.). Artifact group information can aid in identifying gross artifact patterning and formation processes. In addition to group, a type attribute is used as a very specific description of the artifact in question, potentially allowing the creation of various other groupings as the material and analysis of each site may dictate.

Ceramic and glass artifacts were cataloged based on the minimum number of vessels. All material from the same unit was evaluated concurrently, and vessel numbers were assigned to each clearly different vessel, even if fragments of the same vessel occurred in different levels. In the case of ceramics, this assessment was predominantly based on rim sherds or unique decorative or form attributes. Vessel designation for bottles was based on either necks or bases, whichever seemed easiest to distinguish for each particular context. Unique vessel numbers were printed on card stock, and each vessel was bagged separately with the number to allow future identification. Each unique vessel was coded for an estimate of its completeness to aid in assessing formation processes.

All artifacts were also coded based on the material of manufacture. In the case of ceramic or glass vessels, decoration, the color of decoration, manufacturing technique, neck finish, and form were all cataloged where applicable. The catalog also contains fields for artifact count, weight, length, width, and diameter that were recorded where appropriate. Date ranges were added for all diagnostic artifacts, based either on maker's

marks, decorative or manufacturing technique, or patent dates. Information on all artifacts was entered into a relational database management program (Paradox and Access) to facilitate subsequent analysis.

The artifact assemblage at Camp Au Train accounted for 26,395 total artifacts from all features encompassing both the CCC and later POW occupations. The total number of artifacts in CCC-era Features 6A (3132), 6D (3021), and 23 (3132) are 8611. These features yielded a total sample of 91 unique vessels: 44 from the Feature 23 area and 47 from the Feature 6 area. These features all date to the CCC occupation: Feature 23 has a TPQ date of 1937; Feature 6D of 1935; and Feature 6A of 1930.

As a large, complex, institutional site, this large sample size is misleading. The most common artifact types are can fragments and wire nails, and while they are part of the internally related totality, they offer little insight into the enrollee's everyday life. Artifacts that speak to more personal aspects of enrollee's experience occur in much smaller numbers. This makes the typical archaeological number-crunching analysis impossible. This is a common issue with the archaeology of CCC camps since the systematic archaeological investigation of such large sites is prohibitive (Libbon 2011; Smith 2001; Tuck 2010). For this reason, I am often forced to use the material culture in illustrative rather than analytical ways, in conjunction with other sources to evoke aspects of everyday life. Additional excavations and a richer sample size would add significantly to our understanding of enrollee's experience.

Another difficulty is knowing how these artifacts got to Camp Au Train and who supplied them. Many of the artifacts were supplied by camp officials. The cans, ceramics,

and other food stuff, as well as architectural artifacts such as window glass and nails represent camp provisioning by the Army. More individual items such as buttons, hair tonic bottles, tobacco cans or beer caps, may have been acquired in the canteen that was stocked by camp officials, brought from home, or bought by men in town. For this reason, the actual choice of these personal artifacts and who is making it is always an open question. Particular beer brands may have been selected and ordered by camp officials, but enrollees may have given them different meanings, rejected them, or bought alternatives in town. Regardless, all of the material is part of the social totality that is Camp Au Train and can inform aspects of camp life.

The archaeological investigation of Camp Au Train also provides spatial data. We surveyed half the site and found 69 features that were mapped with a handheld GPS unit. This GPS data was combined with a 1935 historic plan of Camp Au Train, the historic aerials, and LIDAR maps provided by the Forest Service. to create a GIS. These maps and aerial imagery were georeferenced so that feature locations could be plotted to provide the spatial data for this and other research projects (Figure 2).

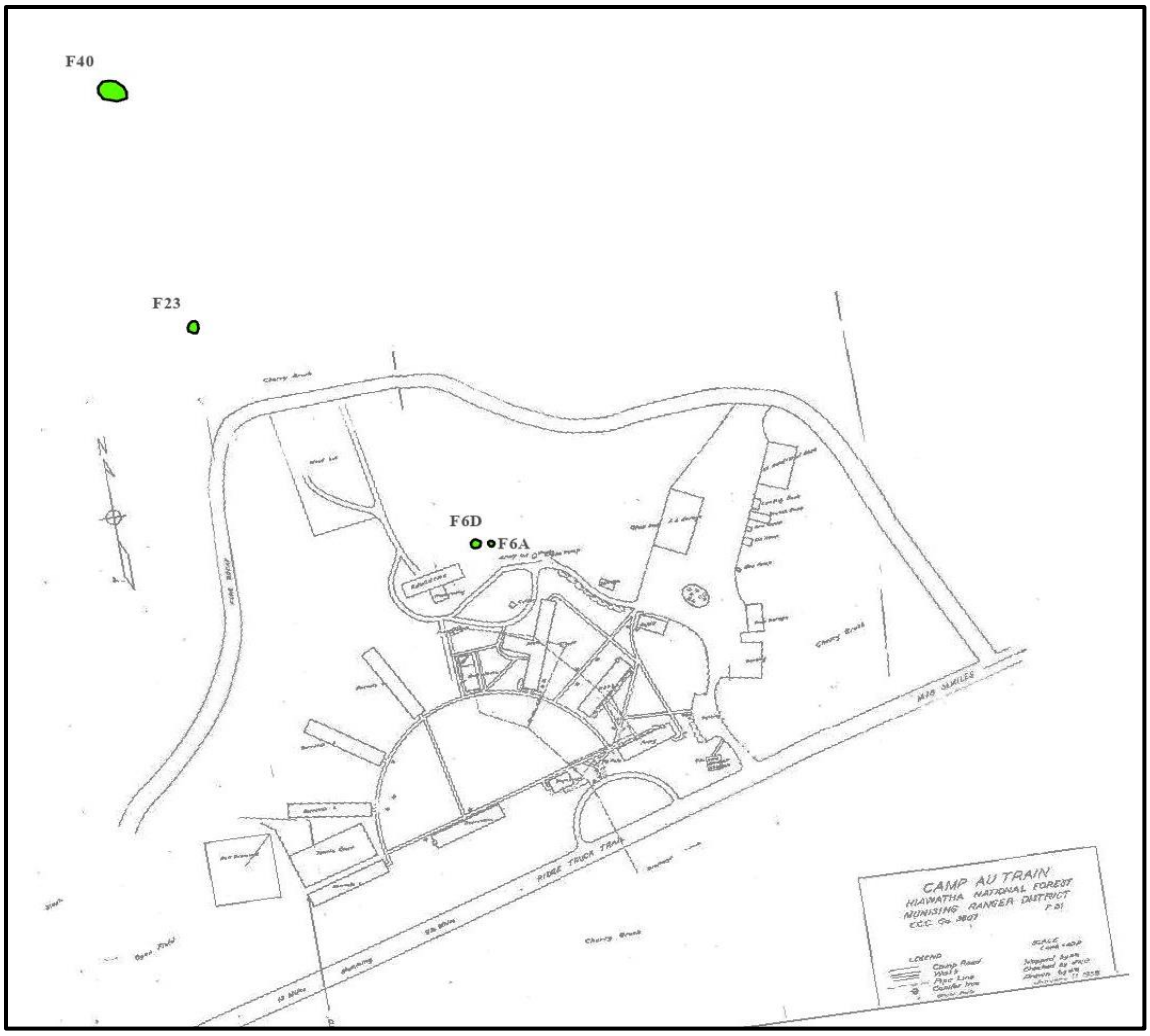


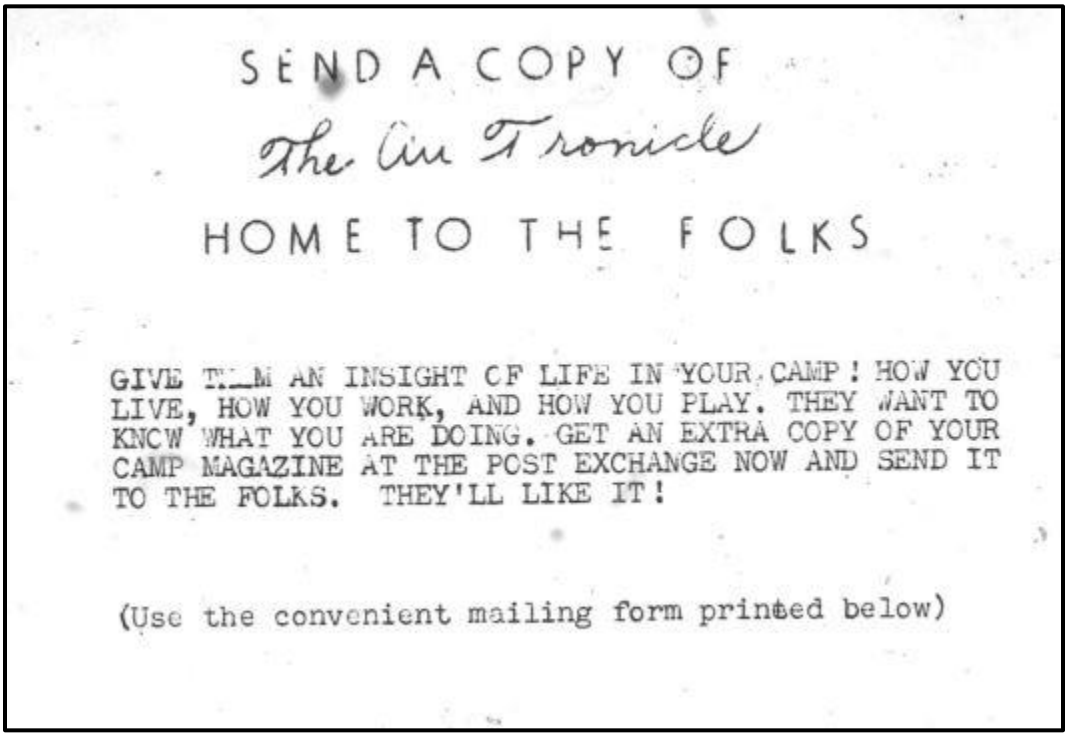

Figure 2: Georeferenced 1935 Plan of Camp Au Train Showing CCC Period Features. (Provided by the US Forest Service)

### 3.3.1 Historical Sources

I use two sets of newsletters related to Camp Au Train and the Fort Brady CCC District. The Camp Au Train newsletter, named the *Au Tronicle*, was written by actual enrollees and employees. It contains many examples of the everyday life of those enrolled in the camp. Four issues of the *Au Tronicle* dating to 1936 were copied from the Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan. Even though I had access to only a few issues, this newsletter contains many articles about the work the enrollees did,

their leisure activities and education, as well as the enrollees' perspectives of the program and its administration and their relations with each other.

These newsletters averaged 18 pages. The first pages highlighted the official narrative of the CCC written about work, morals, manners, and news from officers and CCC staff. The second half was usually articles that highlight barracks activities, going into town, food, KP, and jokes. They then finish up with a page or two of advertisements and the last page calls enrollees to buy an edition of the camp new letter and send it home so enrollees' families can have "insight of life in your camp! how you live, how you work, and how you play" (Figure 3).



SEND A COPY OF

*The Au Tronicle*

HOME TO THE FOLKS

GIVE THEM AN INSIGHT OF LIFE IN YOUR CAMP! HOW YOU LIVE, HOW YOU WORK, AND HOW YOU PLAY. THEY WANT TO KNOW WHAT YOU ARE DOING. GET AN EXTRA COPY OF YOUR CAMP MAGAZINE AT THE POST EXCHANGE NOW AND SEND IT TO THE FOLKS. THEY'LL LIKE IT!

(Use the convenient mailing form printed below)

Figure 3: Last page of the *Au Tronicle* asking enrollees to send newsletter home to their family (Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan).

The *Northlander* is the name of the regional newsletter for the Ft. Brady District that managed all of the CCC camps in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Five issues dating from 1936 and 1937 are part of the Hiawatha National Forest Collections curated in the IHA facilities at MTU. This newsletter was compiled with news from camps across the district and featured more articles from government employees than the *Au Tronicle*. The regional newsletters provide more of a perspective from the CCC leadership that aligned more with the official government perspective. This newsletter also contained articles that focus on work, manhood, sports, and advertisements.

I also use many historic photos as evidence since they are a visual embodiment of everyday life and provide another source to examine the contradictions and congruencies between the real-lived experience and the common narratives. The photos are collected from different sources. A copy of the *Fort Brady Pictorial Review* in the Hiawatha Collections at MTU contains many photos from Camp Au Train and other camps in the area. Several photos are from a trunk that was owned by Luther King, a CCC enrollee from Camp Round Lake, that was left with all his possessions. This trunk is part of the Hiawatha Collections at MTU. The *Northlander* issues are part of this collection. Another group of photos were obtained from the private collection of David McNeil, a resident of Christmas, Michigan, who learned of our work at Camp Au Train and shared his collection. These photos provide a glimpse at everyday life and the layout of the camp.

The oral histories I use are part of the Hiawatha National Forest Oral History Series, published in 1991 and conducted by US West Research. While these oral histories were collected with different goals and objectives, they provide useful information about

daily life in CCC camps across the Upper Peninsula. I have access to seven oral histories from the UP: six from Camp Round Lake and two from Camp Mormon Creek. There is only one oral history from Camp Au Train, provided by Gilbert Hart, which dates to the WWII occupation. Even though it is not from the CCC era, it does provide some evidence for the location of structures at Camp Au Train. The oral histories provide important information about the everyday life of enrollees in CCC camps in Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

My analysis of the data from all of these sources is organized around the four ways the CCC was structured and promoted as shown in the Illinois poster (see Figure 1). These issues of work, play, study, and health were used in many sources to describe and justify the CCC program and provides a way to connect the enrollee's real concrete experience with the sources that are part of the dominant narrative and ideological state apparatus. Unlike a traditional archaeological study that analyzes artifacts and historic sources separately, my analysis uses each of these aspects as different abstractions or vantage points to consider the larger, interconnected totality of the enrollees' experience and their everyday life. My analysis, presented in Chapter 4, is organized by these issues, and various lines of evidence are brought together regardless of the source. I suggest that it is only by weaving these different lines of data together that the contradictions can be laid bare, and I can elucidate the commonly missed enrollee experience and connect it to the larger social totality.

## 3.4 Camp Au Train Background

Camp Au Train, designated Camp F-31 and Company 3607 was located about eleven miles southwest of Munising in Alger County. It was under the authority of the Fort Brady CCC District, based in Sault Sainte Marie, Michigan. This district was established on April 1, 1935, and included all CCC camps in the UP. Camp Au Train was established on June 10, 1935. The company moved to a campsite located in what was later the ball diamond on July 25 and lived in several tents. Eleven enrollees arrived from Detroit on August 11, and a few days later, 92 more arrived, also from Detroit. By mid-September, these enrollees had completed and moved into their new barracks, and by the end of October, they had electricity throughout the camp.

Many improvements were made to the camp by the CCC enrollees. They built a tennis court and a root cellar, and during the spring of 1936, "waste cleared from the area, stumps pulled, and the ground prepared for seeding, sod laid, seed sown, bushes transplanted, walks laid and graveled, and buildings painted." This newsletter article concludes, "now after one year of struggling, it (the camp) is still going strong and victorious. Out of sandy wastes, its members have made an oasis; a pleasant place to live in, one they are proud to show to visitors, and a camp reputed to be the finest in the neighborhood. Long may it live!”

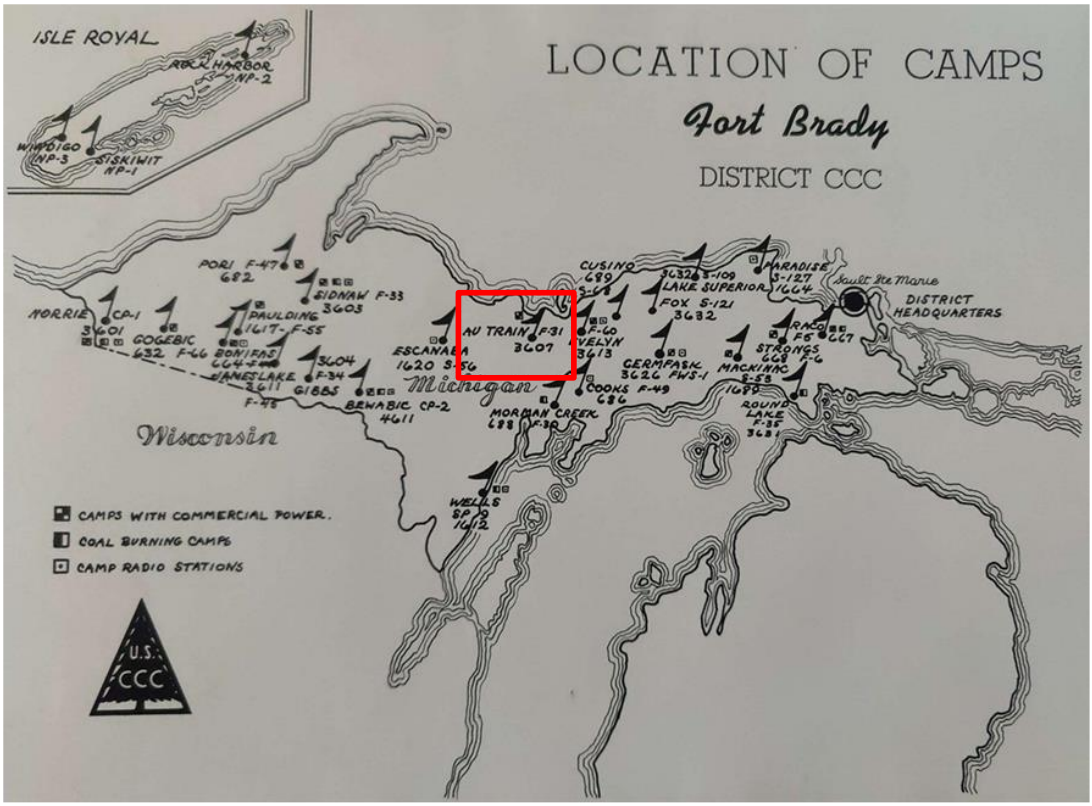



Figure 4: Fort Brady CCC District from the *Pictorial Review* with a highlight around Camp Au Train (Hiawatha National Forest Collection, IHA Archives, Michigan Technological University).

Most of the details of the spatial organization of the camp derive from a 1935 plan, which was redrawn in 1938. The camp's main area is laid out in a sunburst pattern, with the four-enrollee barracks to the west, and mess hall and Forest Service and Army barracks to the east (Figure 5). The recreation hall and dispensary lie along the southern end, the education hall and woodworking shop are to the north, and an array of garages extend in a line to the northwest. The barracks for the army and USFS personnel, the flagpole, the dispensary, and the recreation hall are all front and center in the camp. Moving even further away from the center of the camp towards the fire break is the education hall (F6 area).

As of 1939, the camp housed 192 staff and enrollees, but the 1940 Federal Census lists only two occupants. They include an 18-year-old male working in reforestation and a CCC reforestation foreman. The camp closed in January 1941, but we have little specific information regarding how the camp was abandoned. It was reused for German POWs in 1944, with little spatial change, suggesting that the buildings were left in place.

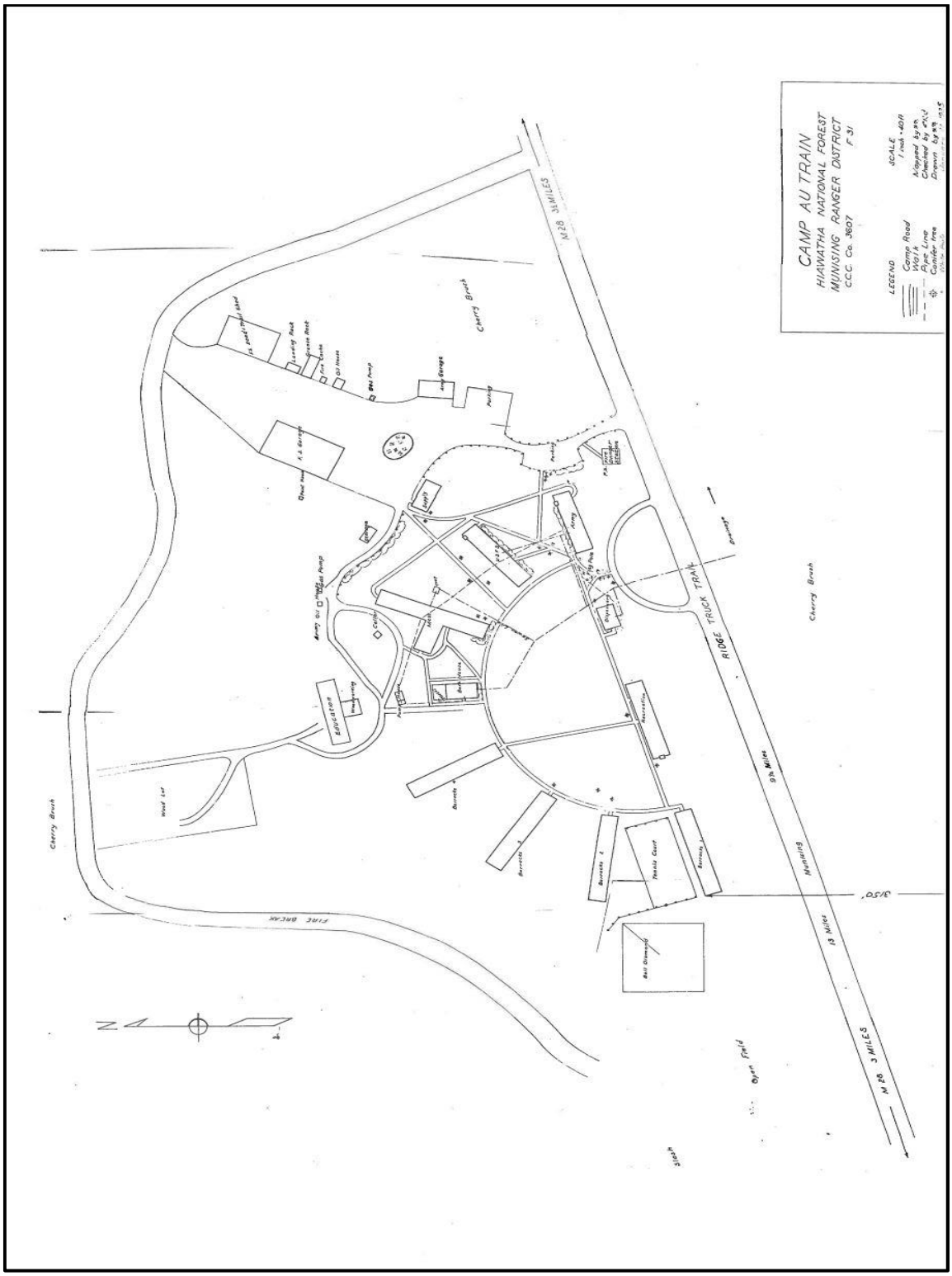



Figure 5: Plan Drawing for Camp Au Train Originally Produced in 1935 Re-Drawn in 1938 (Provided by the US Forest Service)

# 4 Analysis of Work, Play, Study, Health

The key concerns of the CCC were enrollees work, play, study, and health. Each of these vantage points mesh the real concrete materiality of the enrollees' experience with the official governmental positions. For this reason, I use them to organize my analysis in order to examine the contradictions in the CCC.

## 4.1 Work

FDR said that “the overwhelming majority of unemployed Americans, who are now walking the streets and receiving private or public relief, would infinitely prefer to work” (Cited in Maher 2008:78). This idea of the dignity of work in light of the ‘unmanliness’ of relief or unemployment is the paramount reason the CCC was created. As Maher (2008:79) points out, “labor, not leisure, was at the very heart of this work relief program.” The CCC program took young men into the woods and put them to work in conservation, fire safety, and camp maintenance.

### 4.1.1 Conservation Work

Most of the tree-planting and conservation work was done away from the camp. Therefore, very few artifacts specifically deal with this work. Three files, a shovel handle, a broken drill bit, and a folded metal spout hardly capture the intensity of the enrollees' work. One artifact, a Forest Service Location Poster (Figure 6), used to mark land boundaries, is a direct link to these men's work with the Forest Service, but it tells us little more than that they did work. However, newsletter stories about tree planting and

how these men thought about their work bring the enrollees' lived experience to the forefront.

Figure 6: Forest Service Location Poster from F23 (Photo by Wurst).

The enrollees at Camp Au Train saw their CCC labor differently than portrayed in how secondary sources. A common sentiment in the *Au Tronical* was that CCC conservation work was simply busy work with few redeeming qualities. For example, in "What we think of Tree Planting" an article on conservation work, the men talk about planting trees. When asked what they thought of planting trees, overwhelmingly, the answers range from not caring to disdain for the job. Different enrollees replied: "Not much of a job"; "it's alright"; "a little tough once in a while"; "worst job I ever had"; "too many inspectors"; "it's okay"; "passes the time"; "I don't think about it"; "it's terrible"; and "invent a tree planter." These neutral to downright disdainful responses outweigh the only two good responses, although they may be sarcastic, of "ducky" and "pretty good." These sentiments tell us exactly what these men thought of their job. It is important to

note this is not just one individual with a bad attitude; this is ten responses out of twelve men, roughly 1/10th of the camp enrollees in 1936. Other passages in later editions mention that several men took leave extensions to escape tree planting, and that they felt great after tree planting was over.

These sentiments of terrible work are evident from an illustration on the November cover of the *Au Tronicle* that shows the CCC workers' physical strain during tree planting (Figure 7). The image shows the enrollee sweating in the heat, with lines showing the back pain of the hunched-over man. The physical stress is also reflected in the ‘x’ covering his eye, a device often used in cartoons to depict death, incapacitation, or pain. If this is how enrollees thought about CCC conservation work, it becomes easy to understand why they thought this work was awful and tried to avoid it.


Figure 7: November 1936 *Au Tronicle* cover (Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan).

Even though the conservation work occurred away from camp, there is archaeological evidence of copious alcohol consumption at Camp Au Train that may link to efforts by the men to deal with the physical stress of the work. A total of 265 alcohol-related artifacts were found in the CCC-era features. Of these, there were 221 crown caps, 23 beer cans, 2 beer bottles, 12 liquor bottles, and 7 wine bottles. Of the caps that could be identified, the percentage of beer is much higher than soda (Table 1). A total of 69 unique bottles are represented by these assemblages (Table 2). Most of the vessels

were unidentified (30%), followed by liquor (17.4%) and wine (10.1%). While a large range of bottle types are present, alcohol dominates the identified vessels.

People's relationship to alcohol is complex and represents a great deal of ambiguity. It could relate to guys hanging out and having a social beer with friends (discussed later in the play section), or it could be related to an effort to find relief from anxiety or physical or mental pain. From a dialectical perspective, these different meanings are connected, two sides of the same coin (Smith 2008:137) and could represent all these aspects (and others) at the same time. Many archaeologists have interpreted alcohol remains as an escape from work and working conditions (Beaudry 1989; LeeDecker et al. 1987:255; McGuire and Walker 1999:173; Mrozowski et al. 1996). Alcohol can help to deaden physical bodily pain, the reason that many found relief from the patent medicines that had high alcohol contents (Franzen 1992; Reckner and Brighton 1999; Smith 2008).

Alcohol use can also relate to mental strain that could weigh on the enrollees. Since manhood was defined by employment, these men could not achieve this state. The rhetoric of the CCC was to send these boys to the woods, wrenched away from friends and family, in order to achieve manhood. In the process, they were given work that they did not recognize as valuable. This might lead to discontent and self-medication through alcohol, pointing to a contradiction between the enrollees' everyday lives and views of work and what the state claims about work.

| Feature | Beer | | Soda | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6D | **172** | **58%** | 123 | 42% | 295 |
| 23 | **47** | **89%** | 6 | 11% | 53 |

Table 1: Count and Percent of Beer and Soda Bottle Caps from CCC-era Features

| Type | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| Unidentified Bottle | 21 | 30.4 |
| **Wine** | **7** | **10.1** |
| **Beer** | **2** | **2.9** |
| **Liquor** | **12** | **17.4** |
| **Medicinal** | **5** | **7.2** |
| Condiment | 2 | 2.9 |
| Soda | 3 | 4.3 |
| Milk | 7 | 10.1 |
| Cosmetic | 4 | 5.8 |
| Canning/Jelly | 4 | 5.8 |
| Food Product | 2 | 2.9 |
| Total | 69 | 100 |

Table 2: Minimum Vessel Counts for Bottles from CCC-era Features.

Other evidence for more formal medicine in the archaeological record reflects the hard physical labor of the CCC conservation work. We found several “Red Cross” adhesive plaster containers that paint a picture of joints needing support, hands that ‘runneth over with blisters’ requiring protection, and treating cuts (Figure 8). This treatment could have been an enrollee’s self-medication or applied by the camp doctor. In

both cases, the presence of these containers indicates that these men's bodies were being tested and physically torn apart, testimony to the hardship these men faced daily in their work.


Figure 8:Adhesive Plaster Container from F23. (Photo by Wurst)

Enrollees' views of work might be seen from the brand names of tobacco products recovered in the excavations of Camp Au Train. Of the CCC-era features, 67 tobacco cans were found, and 9 are identifiable by brand. Of these, 4 are Velvet, 2 are marked Union Leader, and one each are Union Eagle, Lucky Strike, and Dial brands. The Union Eagle and Union Leader could easily be seen as nationalist symbols. These brands

have imagery of eagles, and the term ‘union’ might point to the United States. This nationalist interpretation connects these brands to the US Army and is further strengthened when put into context with other local sites of the period.

The 1930 store inventory from Cleveland Cliffs Incorporated (CCI) from their Operation 154 camp, located less than a mile from Camp Au Train, listed tobacco brands. Of the 507 tobacco tins on hand, Peerless, Prince Albert, and Tuxedo were the most common brands. Lucky Strike was listed but made up 5% of the tins. Lucky Strike was also the most expensive brand at 13 cents per can. Union Eagle and Union Leader were not listed at all. A search across the totality of the Hiawatha collections located at MTU which accounts for over 52,000 artifacts there yielded no Union Leader, Lucky Strike, or Union Eagle brands.

The only other place where these brands were found in features at Camp Au Train that date to the POW occupation. Two Union Leader tins and a Tuxedo tin were found in Feature 45. These brands seem to be extremely uncommon when connected to the local area, and this might suggest that these brands were chosen and supplied by the Army. This would be consistent with the Nationalist imagery of these brands. However, none of these brands were noted in the excavations of other CCC camps (Libbon 2011; Smith 2001; Tuck 2010).

Even if these tobacco brands were selected by the Army for their nationalist message, they are open to other interpretations as well. For these Michigan men, work was associated with union jobs. Since many of these men were from Detroit, this meant auto jobs. One evocative artifact found at Camp Au Train from a non-CCC context, was a

1937 pin from the International Union of Automobile Workers of America (Figure 9). Given these men's context and background, it is reasonable to suppose they interpreted the word "union" in a very different way.


Figure 9: International Union of Automobile Workers of America pin from Camp Au Train, Feature 45. (Photo by Wurst)

The Lucky Strike cans expand this association and may add a connection to their political ideas of work and manhood. The brand name Lucky Strike alone evokes visions of labor. In Chapter 2 I noted that FDR and the government, in conjunction with big business, used the New Deal to crush labor strikes and anti-capitalist rebellion. The GM auto workers sit down strikes in 1936 and 1937 would have been well known to the

enrollees, and the fact that GM backed down and the workers won would make the brand Lucky Strike even more poignant. The fact that the enrollees at Camp Au Train bought Union Leader and Lucky Strike tobacco could also have been an active political statement. The association of Lucky Strike with labor evident in Ralph Fasanella's 'May Day' painting, which shows an ad for Lucky Strike Cigarettes prominently placed to the left of Karl Marx.

Other strikes occurred in CCC camps across the UP but are barely mentioned in secondary sources. Chabot (2009:63-64) mentions one strike where 25 men threw down their tools and marched away from Camp Paint Lake and another where 30 men refused to work in below-zero weather at Camp Sturgeon River (see Chabot 2009 for more examples). These men decided to stop working to try and achieve better working conditions, even knowing that the repercussions would be confiscated pay and immediate discharge from the CCC.

Working-class young men were intentionally recruited by the CCC. However, the evidence presented here suggests a real contradiction between the way the government framed work in the program and the way the enrollees interpreted it. The enrollees expressed angst against the pointless conservation work, and some even rebelled against the work itself. The presence of alcohol hints to their efforts at self-medication, and a number of adhesive plaster containers point to the physical damage that this work did. The presence of many tobacco products with union sentiments found at Camp Au Train indicates that the enrollees shared collective working-class values to support their labor in contradiction to the possible nationalist interpretation of these brand names. For some

men at Camp Au Train, the conservation work that the CCC prioritized did not meet their values. Instead, they considered this "not much of a job." As Williams (1940:14) noted, the Depression brought out that the youth at the bottom of the economic heap had little choice but to accept work that they did not like.

### 4.1.2 Fire and safety

Conservation work was not the only labor the men at Camp Au Train engaged in. Enrollees were actively used in firefighting. They spent a total of 6.5 million man-days fighting fires between 1934 and 1942. The enrollees needed to go on fire patrols, know the best routes to get into forests for quick deployment, and be willing to use axes, hoes, pumps, and bulldozers to stop any blazes. At least 47 enrollees died due to fires, indicating that the work was dangerous (Salmond 1967).

Enrollees at Camp Au Train seldom talked about their work fighting forest, and they did not explicitly mention the danger. One article in the August edition of the *Au Tronicle* touches on this subject, noting that "a group of 60 men were nearly trapped in the blaze by shifting wind. When they thought they were done for, they all rose and sang 'My Country Tis of Thee.' Fortunately, however, they managed to make good their escape." The article goes on to state that "Leader Mason and [his men] of this group were missing for one night. When they returned to camp the next day, the other men, who thought they had perished, were glad to see them." The dangerous work of firefighting is glazed over and covered in a mask of patriotism. Besides this article, there is little in the *Au Tronicle* about how the men feel about firefighting. Compared to the numerous mentions of the pain of tree planting, this life-threatening work is not mentioned in any

significant way. However, what does bleed through in this example is the need for solidarity in their last moments and the connection to their fellow enrollees. The men engage in a song in their perceived final moments, a song that they all probably knew. We can imagine that the enrollees' complete powerlessness in this situation must have come as quite a shock in the context of the bodily control they are taught in the CCC (see Chapter 2). Masculinity for these men was about discipline and control, but in the face of death, they were utterly powerless, and their only option was to sing and find solidarity with their fellow workers.

The concern for fire safety is evident on the Camp Au Train landscape. A fire break surrounds the outer edge of the camp and exists today as part of the North Country Trail, a multi-state recreational trail. This fire break completely encircled the camp and was planned from the outset. One other feature at Camp Au Train relates to fire safety. Feature 40 represents a trash pit with a surface dimension of 156 square meters, much larger than the 10 square meter average for other trash pit features at the site (Maze 2023). This feature is also located at the perimeter of the camp beyond the fire break (see Figure 10). A 1 x 1-meter unit excavated in the center of this area documented that the soils were multiple layers made up of ash (see Figure 11). This suggests that Feature 40 was a special trash pit used to dump ashes, probably to ensure that no hot coals would cause a fire. This is another example of the precautions and the labor that were invested in the safety of the camp.

Figure 10: 1939 Aerial Image of Camp Au Train with the Fire Break and F40 Highlighted in Red.


Figure 11: Feature 40 Excavation Unit, Showing the Thick Ash Deposits (Photo by Wurst)

One artifact found in the excavations at Camp Au Train, a fire extinguisher bottle, has a clear connection to the fire safety measures that must connect to the CCC enrollee's mind (Figure 12). A historic photo of the bathhouse has a fire extinguisher prominently located near the door (Figure 13). Although CCC work focused on the prevention and containment of forest fires to protect the forests' national wealth, the reality of forest fires was an everyday threat to enrollees' lives. This bottle suggests the contradictory relationship of the everyday danger of CCC work that is seldom mentioned.

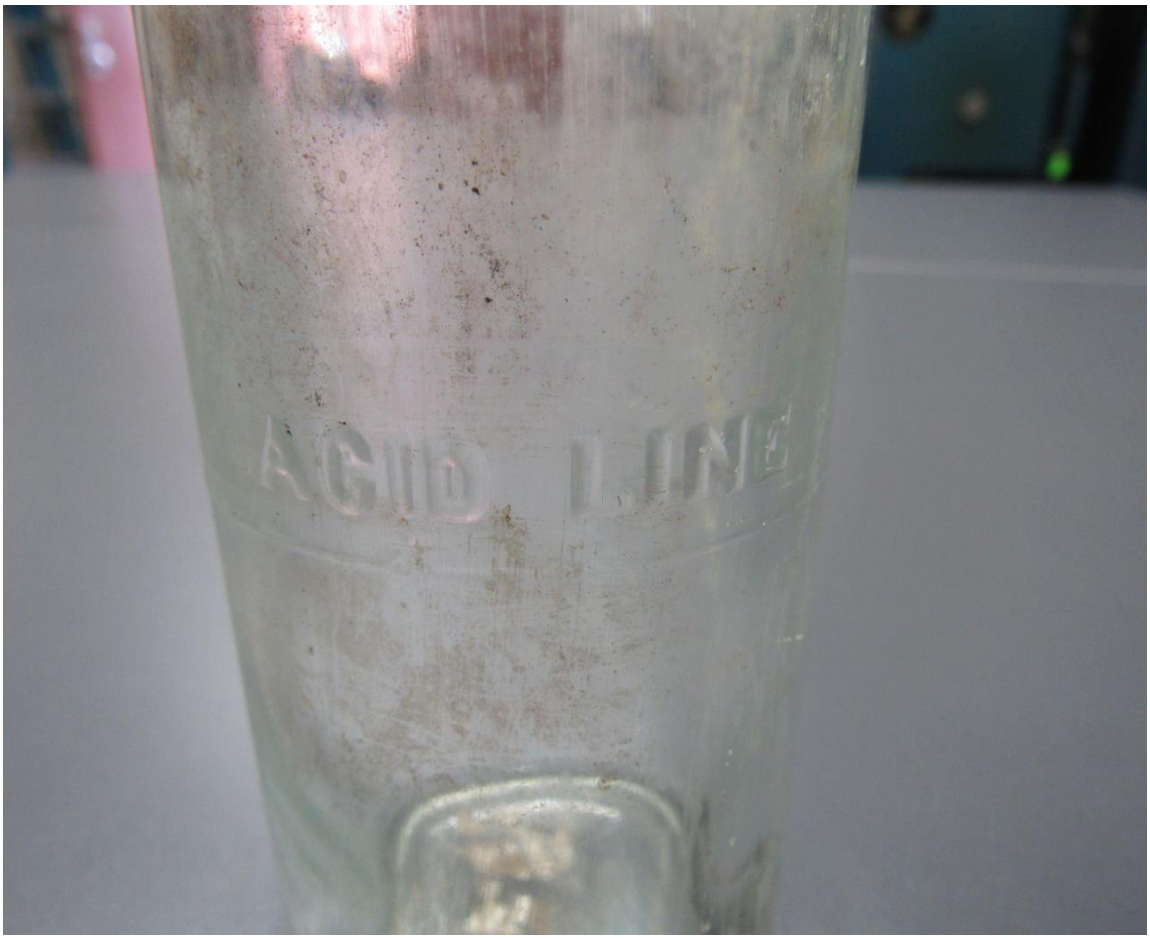



Figure 12: Bottle from a Badger Fire Extinguisher found in Feature 6D. (Photo by Wurst)

Figure 13: Detail of the Bathhouse Showing a Fire Extinguisher on the Wall (Provided by David McNeil, Christmas, Michigan, Hiawatha National Forest Collection, IHA Archives, Michigan Technological University).

Enrollees' fire safety jobs also included manning towers to watch for fires. Fire watch duty is frequently mentioned in the *Au Tronicle*. The enrollees did not consider this real work and often associated fire duty with loafing. For example, an article titled

‘Scanning the Horizon”, which appears in the October edition, describes fire tower watch as the “best of the gold-bricking positions” at Camp Au Train (Figure 14).

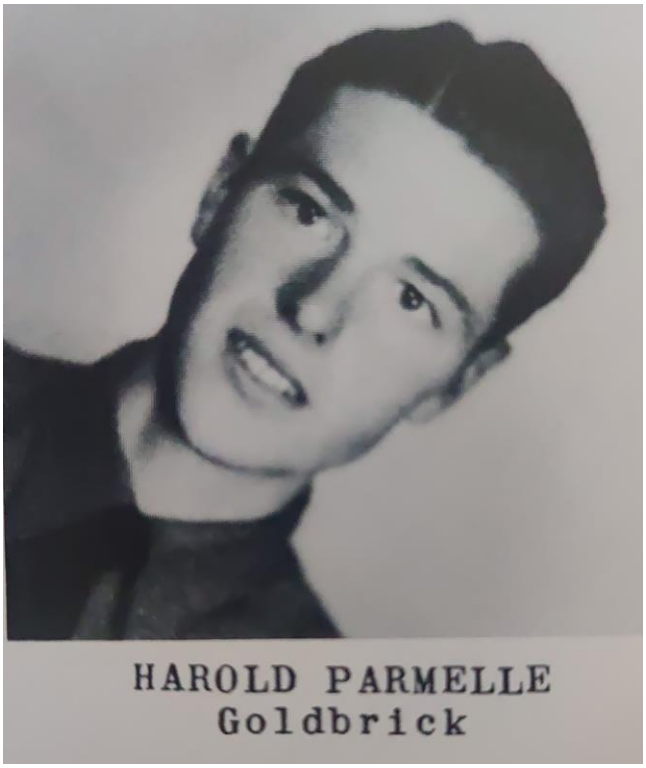



Figure 14: Camp Au Train's Goldbrick award from the *Pictorial Review* of the Fort Brady District (Hiawatha National Forest Collection, IHA Archives, Michigan Technological University).

Goldbricks are the term for those who tried to get easy jobs. Enrollees associate fire duty with loafing, spending long hours doing nothing but changing their sitting position under the guise of “scientific work.” Fire watch consisted of talking about baseball scores, scrutinizing visitors, and watching for ‘fair ladies’ and smoke. This charge of gold-bricking points to the contradictory nature of fire tower duty. On one hand, it was not considered real work. On the other hand, the enrollees saw it as easy labor and a way to get out of physically demanding tree planting labor (which they also did not consider real

work). Labor related to fire fighting and safety in the CCC camps was contradictory. Administrators focused CCC work on fires since the threat was real; the enrollees saw how this work was important for their very lives and yet saw fire watch as a way to escape the physical rigors of other forms of labor.

### 4.1.3 Camp Maintenance

The enrollees also performed labor in the creation and maintenance of the camp. This work included building the camp itself, working in camp offices, and the mess hall. These men performed a massive amount of labor building the camp. An *Au Tronicle* article from June titled "One Year of Progress" states:

> We have accomplished many objectives. We now have a comfortable home with many facilities for education and recreation. We have completed and are now engaged in completing work projects on the public lands in our work area that will, for many years to come, be a testimonial of our labors."

Thus, their work is evident in the creation and constant maintenance of their 'home' (Figure 15). While the archaeological excavations did not focus on the barracks or other structures, all of these features are the product of enrollees' labor. A total of 835 architecture group artifacts were found, comprising 10% of the total assemblage. This low density is not surprising, given the focus of the excavations on trash pits. However, the 559 nails, each of which were probably driven by an enrollee, speaks to their labor building the camp.

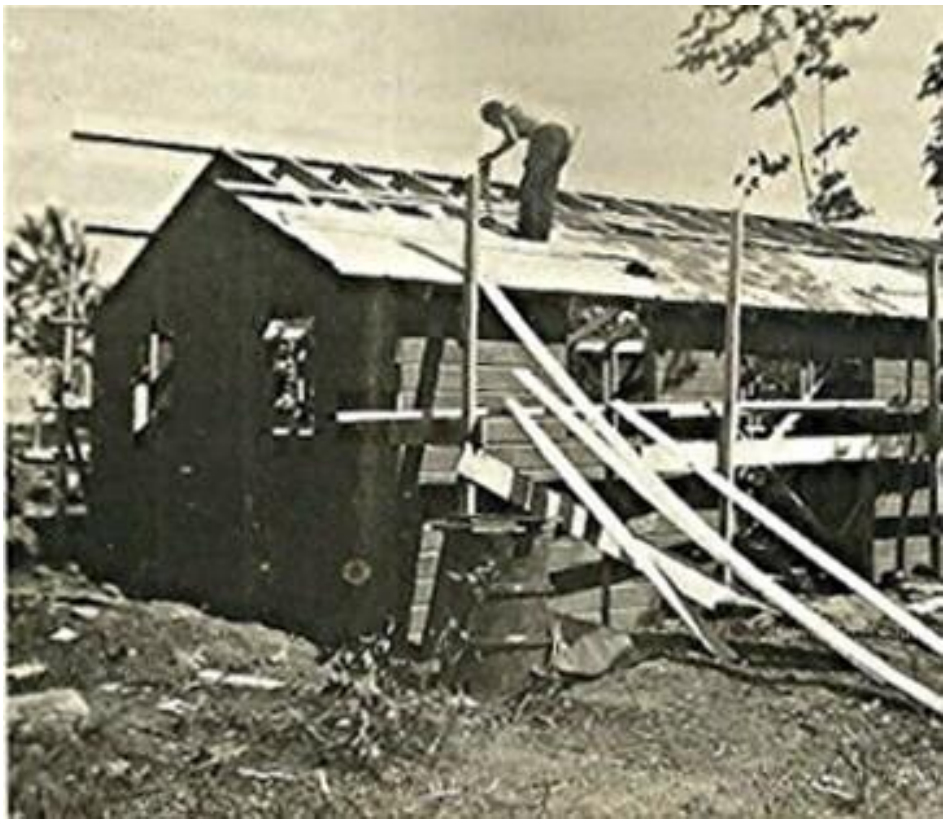


Figure 15: Photo from the David McNeil Collection of Camp Au Train. (Provided by David McNeil, Christmas, Michigan, Hiawatha National Forest Collection, IHA Archives, Michigan Technological University).

A handful of enrollees worked in the camp office or performing overhead duties (Alexander 2018:65). Most of the camp work that is discussed in the *Au Tronicle* relates to the Master Plan office. Enrollees who worked in the Master Plan office summarized, tabulated, inventoried, and reported all the CCC work done in the forest. One enrollee who had a $1200 college education worked in the Master Plan office, so it seems that these jobs may be limited to those with a certain class or educational background. The newsletter editor "wonders if he knows what shovels are for." The restricted nature of camp office work is interesting in the context of common ideas that the CCC was only for 'working class boys.' For example, Suzik (2005:11) calls the CCC the college campus of the working-class people. This context also highlights the antagonism, not explicitly

stated, between enrollees over work. An article titled “High Accident Rate In Master-Plan Office” was printed in the first edition of the *Au Tronicle*. This article states that:

> One would naturally suppose that the office would be a safe place to work in. But so far the Master-plan office had a high rate of accidents. The dead-line was reached when Ed. Gutowski suffered a severe laceration of his arm when he was able to put his elbow through the glass panel in the tracing table… Mental fatigue, of course, is responsible for the boys slipping off the stools so often.

This article makes two jabs that capture how the CCC men think about office work. The idea that ‘one’ [a typical enrollee] would ‘naturally’ think that office work is safe. This perhaps points to deeper ideas that college-educated people did ‘soft,’ cushy work. Thus, the ‘harm’ of this labor is mental rather than physical. The fact that Gutowski felt the need to submit an essay that described the Master Plan office work suggests that other enrollees did not consider it ‘real’ work.

The mess hall and KP duty were other forms of labor performed by the enrollees, an example of their everyday life that kept the camp running. There was a column in the *Au Tronicle* dedicated to mess hall news called “Hash House Flashes,” which covered the menu, who was working in the kitchen, and the quality of the food. Work in the mess hall was valued by the enrollees, who sometimes used this duty as a bargaining chip. For example, “Moth-Ball Moffit traded his window [in the barracks] to Jim Nelson for his mess job.” The fact that he traded his well-placed bunk for mess duty suggests that this was another way for enrollees to get out of the physical labor of planting trees.

There are no specific artifacts that relate to the enrollees' mess hall or KP duties. However, since most of this work was done by the enrollees, we can see all of the artifacts recovered that relate to food production and consumption as the product of their

labor. Enrollees would have opened all of the No. 10 cans found at the site, and all undecorated ironstone vessels would have been used and washed by them (Figure 16).

Figure 16: Cans Recovered from Feature 6A. (Photo by Wurst)

### 4.1.4 Summary

Labor was at the very heart of the CCC. The program was designed to provide work for the Great Depression's unemployed. The enrollees agreed; however, their response indicates that conservation work was not the employment that they wanted or would make them men. The program was structured to keep these young men away from waged jobs and to keep rowdy young men off the streets and out of prison. The enrollee could not achieve manhood without a job, but since CCC work was not considered real work, the program changed nothing for them.

The everyday life of these men shows the contradictions between their ideas of work and the jobs they were given in the CCC. The tobacco brands Union Leader, Union Eagle, and Lucky Strike point to these contradictions. The enrollees thought that tree planting was horrible and went to great lengths to avoid it and used alcohol and medications to soften the physical toll of this work. They considered fire watch an easy gold-brick position, while office and mess hall work was preferable to planting trees. Labor is at the heart of the CCC, but the enrollees saw it as busy work while the government used it to stave off the growing discontent of people during the Great Depression.

## 4.2 Play

Even though work was at the heart of the CCC, play figures prominently in the sources used for this analysis. Play covers all aspects of camp life, commonly seen as leisure and recreation or the activities enrollees engaged in when they were not working. These recreational activities can be grouped as 1) sports, 2) producing the newsletter 3) interaction with women, and 4) hanging out with friends.

For the CCC authorities, recreation and leisure revolved around the discipline and control of the men (Alexander 2018; Maher 2008; Rivers 2018; Suzik 2005). Many of these activities were specifically designed to hone males to be fit for capitalist work. These duties were the responsibility of the Educational Adviser at Camp Au Train, who oversaw camp education and recreation programs. He argued that about 12% of the men at Camp Au Train made no worthy use of the leisure facilities. He urges “the men to get acquainted with camp leisure hour programs, read a book, make a belt, pocketbook, or a longbow, turn out to some field events or baseball, attend a class, or read the daily

newspaper. You will be a better and happier man if you do so." The Educational Advisor makes a clear statement that to be worthy, enrollees needed to engage in formal camp activities that were implemented and supervised by the army officers and educational staff. This proper use of free time would make them ready for employment and 'happier.'

These formal leisure time activities are also stressed in the *Northlander* article by Educational Advisor at Camp Norrie J.A. Walkenhauer called "Use of Leisure Time." He starts out stating, "Leisure time well spent is like an investment with paying returns." He points out that it is only though engagement with "wholesome self-improvement activates" such as "involvement in formal classes" or "reading books, athletics, and handicrafts" can an enrollee develop "principles of character" that will act as an investment for their future. Enrollees that do not spend their time in these ways will have "the bad side of their nature come out." Walkenhauer makes sure to stress that there are good ways and bad ways to spend leisure time, the good way is in constant development of character through engagement with formal activities at the CCC camps. Gorham points out that this 'character building' for CCC enrollees was the constant development of attitudes, discipline, and morals that will lead to them being good workers (Gorham 1992:236-237).

However, Suzik (2005:164-165) discusses the work of contemporary sociologist Helen Walker that puts a different spin on these same leisure time activities. Her 1938 study of 272 CCC concludes that most enrollees routinely criticized adult-sponsored recreation activities, claiming that the organized activities were poorly conceived and lacked a plan (Suzik 2005:164-165). They also criticized Camp Commanders and

educational advisors for showing clear favoritism when choosing boys to represent the company. Only 27% of enrollees that Walker interviewed reported playing basketball, 15% football, 11% artistic performance, 7% wrote for the newsletter, and 51% played baseball at some point. She noted that most enrollees preferred unofficial activities that had little to no adult supervision or administrative hierarchy, such as spending time with friends, engaging in practical jokes, gambling, and going to town. Walker's study hints at contradictions between camp authorities and the enrollees in their views of sports and other recreational activities.

### 4.2.1 Sports

Sports are an arena where men, lacking access to the employment that defines masculinity, can achieve the ideal fantasy of manhood. Kimmel argues that sports are introduced to men when they are in crisis, specifically when "the working life of men become[s] too precocious to provide a firm footing" (Kimmel 1997:9). This is obviously the case for the enrollees who could not achieve their breadwinner status and were instead 'bread-losers' due to the Depression. The CCC pushed sports to ameliorate this problem. Kimmel states that these sports taught the men how to be good citizens, how to be loyal, self-reliant, work with others, and be obedient: "in short sports made boys into men" (Kimmel 1997:137-138). Chabot points out that sports in the CCC were important to channel the boundless energy of the youth before it could erupt (Chabot 2009:35). Thus, in the CCC, sports functioned as a way to discipline the body and minds of enrollees and channel their energy into productive activities (Gorham 1992).

Competition was an important part of sports activities. The CCC companies had their own athletic teams to play against teams from other camps and local schools

(Alexander 2018: 111; Chabot 2009:38). These team sports included volleyball, bowling, badminton, track and field, tennis, football, baseball, and boxing. The specific sport did not matter as long as it got the men to build their bodies, channel their energy into something 'productive,' and learn how to be a good worker (Gorham 1992).

The men of Camp Au Train played against other teams in the area. For example, in October 1936, the baseball players from Camp Au Train joined a league with Camps Evelyn, about 11 miles east of Camp Au Train, and Cusino about 5 more miles to the northeast (Figure 17). The league provided a formal space for between camp competitions even though Camp Au Train's team was not very good and lost all of their games. The enrollees also competed with each other in camp. The Vets vs Rookies baseball game was a challenge to see which team had the most athletic ability. This competition was a test between men solidified through hard CCC labor and the rookies who are yet to be men. However, the rookies kept the game close until the very end, when the veterans pulled away and embarrassed the rookies with an 18 to 7 final score.


Figure 17: Camp Au Train Baseball Team from the *Pictorial Review* of the Fort Brady District (Hiawatha National Forest Collection, IHA Archives, Michigan Technological University)

All of the team sports exploits were reported in a dedicated column of the *Au Tronicle*. In this way, the importance of team competition was spread to all those who read the articles, cheering and supporting the team functions. Kimmel notes that "as men felt their real sense of masculinity eroding, they turned to fantasies that embodied heroic physical action, reading novels of the Wild West and cheering the exploits of baseball and football players" (Kimmel 1997:118). This active reading and writing about the exploits of the Camp Au Train teams provided a place for men not on the team to be involved in the fantasy. This is part of the reason that the Educational Advisor told enrollees to read the *Au Tronicle.*

Boxing was another sport that was prevalent in CCC camps (Figure 18). An article in the October edition of the *Au Tronicle* talks about how Biffer Oswald lost his fight with Razor Kid Bannister. Oswald was criticized for leading with his chin,

indicating he was inexperienced. A later article mentions that Oswald did not even have a mentor. The November 1936 edition of the *Au Tronicle* includes only one article on boxing that states, “Boxing instructor wanted. See Mr. Piziali.” Boxing is seldom included in the *Au Tronicle,* perhaps because they lacked an instructor. This could harken back to the problems mentioned in Walker’s report, that camp leisure activities lacked structure and good planning.

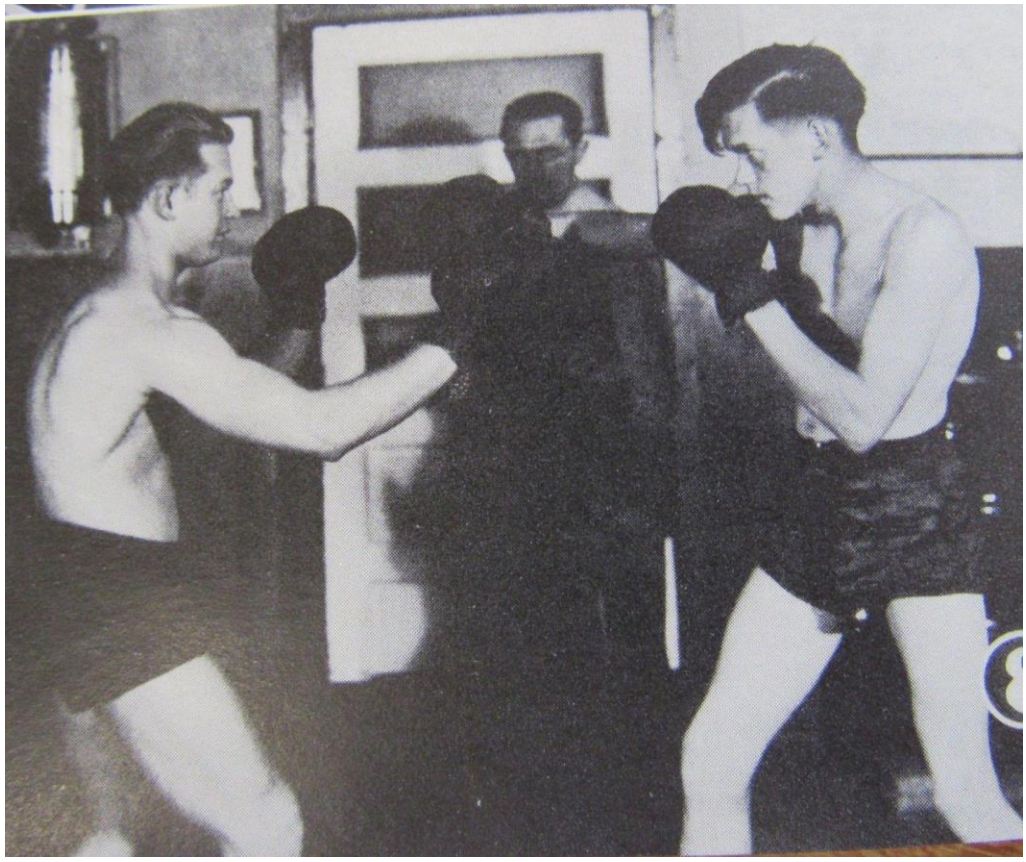


Figure 18: Boxing at Co.686 from the *Pictorial Review* of the Fort Brady District (Hiawatha National Forest Collection, IHA Archives, Michigan Technological University).

Even though boxing seems to be a limited leisure activity, the candy that these men ate, including the brands Powerhouse and Heavyweight Champ, refer to boxing and evoke visions of masculinity that connect to sports and bodybuilding. Of the 14 identified candy wrappers recovered from archaeological excavation, 5 are Powerhouse, and 6 are Heavyweight Champ. Powerhouse is a way to describe a forceful or dominant man who has great strength, lots of energy, skill, intelligence, control and is athletic, aggressive, and inspiring. The Heavyweight Champ also draws on the same themes of masculinity. As the heaviest weight group in boxing, the champ is a strong, powerful, forceful, and dominant man. The candy is advertised as "a husky candy bar for husky men" (Cornebise 2004:225). These qualities come from practice, discipline, and many years of training. Thes candy bar brands were not found in other regional sites dating to the 1930s, but without contemporary store records, we cannot tell whether they were common or not. The similarity of the message of the brands with the CCC's emphasis on sports and male bodies seems significant. Even with the limitations, these men were ironically, buying this sugary candy that plays into the male fantasies that Kimmel (1997) mentions and highlights the relationship between leisure, sports, and masculinity at the camp.


Figure 19: Heavyweight Champ Candy Bar Wrapper from Camp Au Train (Photo by Wurst)

The final sport that Camp Au Train was specifically known for was tennis. However, this is mostly because it was a pet project of camp authorities. The court was ordered to be built by Dr. Home and Lt. Traub, who were both tennis enthusiasts. These two administrators recruited a group of 'interested' enrollees to build the court. It was located between Barracks 1 and 2 and is visible on the Camp Au Train plan (Figure 5) and the 1939 aerial image (Figure 10). The tennis court was ready for play in a month and was described as the "gem of the camp." The newsletter mentions that "now that the court is finished... a few enrollees are taking to the game like a duck takes to water." The

next issue of the *Au Tronicle* mentions a tennis tournament with 16 players, but tennis is never mentioned again at Camp Au Train. A wrapper from a Spaulding tennis racket was found in the Feature 23 excavations (Figure 20), but no other evidence for tennis was found.

The example of the tennis court shows that if the enrollees needed special sports facilities, they had to build them with extra labor that was outside of their normal workday. This, combined with the fact that the tennis court was the 'pet project' of a camp administrator, may explain why there is so little mention of tennis in the newsletters. His idea of a suitable sport does not seem to have been shared by the enrollees, perhaps because tennis did not fit their image of a 'manly art.'


Figure 20: Piece of a Spaulding Tennis Racket Label Found in F23. (Photo by Wurst)

Even though sports were leisure activities, they continued the formal discipline of enrollees' bodies and minds outside of the workday. These men were learning obedience, working with others, citizenship, and competition, all aspects of behavior for the workplace. The evidence for sports also highlights the disconnect between enrollees and the supervisors, specifically, the push for sports with no support and pushing activities that they wanted but the enrollees might not have cared much about, like tennis.

### 4.2.2 Other Camp Activities: Bodybuilding

Bodybuilding was also part of the everyday life of the men in the CCC camps, although it does not figure prominently in the newsletters. All the work the enrollees did

was building muscle, but bodybuilding or weightlifting was also a leisure activity in the camp. Kimmel notes that bodybuilding developed in the early 1900s and took place in "a new masculine hangout, a new institution where men could pump up those listless, lethargic, feminized bodies- the gym" (1997:126). An *Au Tronicle* article states, "Two-Ton Drake has inherited a set of muscle builders lately. Between those and eating plenty of spinach and Spanish rice he expects within a week he will be able to move the iron chairs in the officers mess without any assistance." This suggests that 'Two-Ton Drake' is lifting weights during his leisure time. A photograph from the Fort Brady P*ictorial Review* shows a group of shirtless men in front of a set of weights (Figure 21). Images of shirtless men like this are a common trope that 'embodies' the new ideas of masculinity based on physical strength and subject to constant construction (Kasson 2001).


Figure 21: Fort Brady Weight Lifters in *Pictorial Review* (Hiawatha National Forest Collection, IHA Archives, Michigan Technological University)

Another reference to bodybuilding can be seen in the beer brands found at Camp Au Train. A total of 220 bottle caps were identifiable by brand. Of these, 94 (43%) were from the Atlas Brewing Company in Chicago. Atlas was a Greek Titan forced to hold the world on his shoulders. Charles Atlas, a famous bodybuilder during the CCC era, chose this name to evoke male strength. He was notorious for being a skinny weakling who, through training, discipline, and control, gained a new masculine body. These goals and objectives mesh with the dominant ideology of the CCC program. The name Atlas on these beer bottles would have been familiar to the enrollees for these reasons. Beer might

seem like an odd place to see a reference to bodybuilding but mirrors the marketing of the Powerhouse and Heavyweight Champ candy bars. The frequency of these bottle caps suggests that this vision of masculinity would have surrounded the enrollees in their everyday life.


Figure 22: A Sample of Crown Caps from Feature 6D (Photo by Wurst)

### 4.2.3 Other Activities: Newsletter

Another leisure activity that the Educational Advisor talked about was engagement with the *Au Tronicle*. Working on the newsletter provided the space for

enrollees to channel their energy into worthwhile leisure activities. The newsletter reproduced the know-how for a good CCC worker, and there is a sense that these ideas were enforced. For example, an article in the August 1936 edition of the *Northlander*, called "Trials of an Assistant Editor," by Robert L Hunt 3617 co CCC reads:

> I sit alone in my 2x4 cubby hole, shunned by all as the only man in the world who can say anything about anybody and get away with it. For several long, tedious hours, I have been racking my frayed brain for some fitting subject for today's editorial. I sit immovable in anticipation of my monotonous task. My brain fears that some high-mucky muck will be displeased with my work. My dear readers, I ask you in all fairness and truth, is there any reason why I should be shunned by all humanity, simply because I am forced to write- not what I think, nor what I want to read, but only those things which will not be detrimental to the prestige of my owners.

This important passage reveals that Hunt is extremely alienated. His fellow enrollees shun him because of his reporting, but what he reports is determined by the authorities who may censor his work. This harkens back to the amount of surveillance and control that the camp 'owners' put upon these men in the attempt to mold them into a certain type of worker. Hunt got a free pass if what he wrote was acceptable to the authorities. As he says, he does not get to write what he thinks or what he wants to read, but the only thing which will not be detrimental to the prestige of his owners. This passage also raises questions about why other newsletter statements contained such negative reviews about their conservation work described in the section on work. This may indicate that the censorship was not as oppressive as Hunt implies. However, the article that contained these negative statements had a p.s. that stated, "here's hoping the bosses won't be too hard on the above men." This suggests that the 'bosses' actively read the newsletter (or they were afraid they would) even if they did not censor it.

The relationship between the newsletter writers and the authorities connects to the criticism that there was too much supervision of CCC enrollees. According to Walker's study, only 7% of camp enrollees wrote for the newsletter. After the people who started the *Au Tronicle* were discharged from the CCC, new writers did not take their place. An article titled "We Want Writers," published in the last available issue of the *Au Tronicle*, stated that they needed more people to publish the paper but could not pay contributors. All they could offer is the 'prestige' of having their name attached to an article. Producing the newsletter left little trace in the archaeological record, although 2 thumb tacks, 3 paper staples, 3 paper clips, 2 pencils, and a mechanical pencil may reflect this work.

Hunt's quote shows the absolute control experienced by the *Northlander* and potentially by the *Au Tronicle* writers. This 'leisure' activity, writing for no pay and being shunned by other enrollees, makes it incredible that anyone wanted to engage in this activity in the first place.

### 4.2.4 Interacting with Women

Walker's survey noted that enrollees preferred unsupervised trips to town, and these activities are frequently mentioned in the *Au Tronicle*. The newsletter always had a dedicated section called "Doin' the Town," and all of the items that describe trips to town were basically about men and their activities with women.

> Enrollees were typically in their teens when they served in the corps, many were either still going through the final stages of puberty and physical maturation, or they were inexperienced in their relationships with the opposite sex, or both. Therefore, they were exceptionally eager to prove their manliness to one

> another… many CCC boys sought to out-drink, out-fight, out-gamble, and out-flirt the local boys and each other (Suzik 2005:131).

Thus, part of being a man was dating women. The importance of women to enrollees' lives is clear from images included in Luther King's trunk. This was a complete trunk, found in the attic of a store, that was left by King when he left the CCC. It included his uniform, instructional manuals, and personal objects that had many images of women (Figures 23-24)

The Army tried its best to control enrollee's interactions with women. The army was particularly concerned with controlling sexually transmitted diseases, becoming a priority after Thomas Parran was appointed Surgeon General in 1936 (Gaiser 2016). Controlling STDs in CCC camps was also important since this was an ailment that carried grounds for discharge from the program once their treatment was complete. But there was only so much they could do to supervise these young men's sexual affairs. Suzik quotes a CCC camp commander who stressed the importance that women played in the lives of these CCC men:

> Two hundred boys, miles out in the woods in a camp, with only their own kind. It was sex starvation. I (Commander) would make an effort to bring female companionship to the boys in camp with dances and other entertainment. There was no doubt about it that it was necessary for the happiness and welfare of the youngsters (Suzik 2005:178).

The Commander wants to bring the females into camps, with dances and other entertainment, to control, discipline, and surveil the CCC men while they are at camp. An image from a page in the *Pictorial Review* of the Fort Brady District, left blank for

autographs, shows this army vision of appropriate interaction with women (Figure 24), a starkly different idea of male-female interactions than that conveyed by Luther King's pin-up picture. This connects to Walker's study that states the importance of unsupervised activities for these young men. No wonder they would rather go into town to meet women on their own.

Figure 23: A Pinup Picture from Luther King's CCC Chest, (Hiawatha National Forest Collection, IHA Archives, Michigan Technological University).


Figure 24: Illustration from the autograph page from the *Pictorial Review* of the Fort Brady District (Hiawatha National Forest Collection, IHA Archives, Michigan Technological University)

The 'Doin', the Town' column contains many references to interactions with women at Camp Au Train. A few excerpts are listed below.

> Vol 1 No. 4 1936 Rookies are an optimistic sort of people. They all went to Munising on their first Saturday night in camp, and really believed that the trucks were going to be met by a bevy of beautiful girls who would welcome the boys with open arms and coyly say "Won't you be my steady boyfriend?" And when they expect that off Munising, the height of optimism has been reached.

> Vol 1. No. 2 1936: “Smilie” Keith, formerly known as “Snagtooth” is now going around singing love ballads and picking posies. The cause of it all is a Marquette damsel who answers to the name of “Gerty.”
>
> Vol 1. No. 2 1936: “Farmer” Follet, the great Romeo, went to Marquette and said that when he got back he would have as his very own, the love of a fair maiden, but he came back love-hungry. What: no sex appeal?
>
> Vol 1 No. 3 1936: All for the love of a fair maid, they say, Chuck Keith has taken to being a vagabond… Once in a great while, he feels democratic and gives the local dance hall a break. Who the girl is, nobody knows, and he won’t tell. Smart Boy!

This small sample makes it clear that interaction with women was important to these young men, and their interactions were met with good-natured joking. A courtship joke included in the *Au Tronicle* shows that even if they were away from direct supervision, the structure of the CCC still impacted their interactions with women. The joke goes:

> Munising gal: My boyfriend from the CCC is very considerate.
>
> Her Friend: How do you mean?
>
> MG: He always quits necking me promptly at twelve o’clock on Saturdays.

Another aspect that relates to men’s interaction with women was personal appearance. In the July 1936 edition of the *Northlander,* J.A. Walkenhaur, the Educational Advisor of Camp Norrie, stated:

> Personal appearance has proven to be of much more importance to each enrollee than can be realized. As required by regulations, each enrollee should always present a neat and orderly appearance.

Army regulations specified that the enrollees have impeccable personal appearance. It is extremely important that they were neat and tidy because:

> Personal appearance is of great importance to the individual and to the group to which he belongs. It is a direct effect upon not only the individual but also the general public with which contact is made.

The reason the CCC was so enthralled with the appearance of the enrollee was that the program would look bad if they looked unseemly. Appearance was a means of controlling and disciplining enrollees' behavior, whether at work or in town, meeting women. The discipline of the body is the discipline of the worker, and a disciplined workforce meant compliant workers that would be less radical (Gorham 1992).

Numerous artifacts relating to personal appearance were recovered from CCC context excavations, including 7 razor blades, a shaving talc can, a hairbrush, a toothbrush, 2 toothpaste tubes, 13 toothpowder cans, and at least 2 hair oil bottles. While the CCC framed appearance in the context of discipline and control, given the men's concern with interacting with women, these personal artifacts likely relate to these activities rather than simply making the company look good.

To educational advisor Walkenhauer, "the clothes make the man," and clothes needed to be pressed, shoes shined, and neckties worn. If the individual did not appear neat, then they were careless and irresponsible. The enrollees were probably responsible for their own laundry and mending their clothes, but very few artifacts relate to this. Only one straight pin represents clothing repair, and one tin from Kreole Quick Shining shoe polish relates to regimented appearance. A clean man shows the success that they have

attained in their work; this also reflects their happiness. Finally, Walkenhaurer finishes his article with this comment: “Happiness is the general aim of life. The degree of it which the individual attains marks the amount of contentment which he derives from life. Content citizens are an asset to our government.”

Other articles emphasize that these men policed each other's behavior in their interactions with women. Louis Hayes, the writer of the ‘Doin' the Town’ article, made critical comments about the wrong way to treat women:

> There is a certain class of fellows who should be listed as Public Enemies: The cradle-snatchers who visit Forest Lake nightly with the mail truck, dally with the affections of the poor, innocent, unsuspecting young girls, and, having given the maids but a short fleeting glance at their illustrious selves, dash away and leave them lonely for the night. These lads say that the only redeeming feature of this trysting is that it does not cost anything.

This quote makes it clear that the men had a specific code for how to treat young women. As ‘public enemies', this behavior did not sit well with the men of the CCC camp, since men are supposed to protect, nurture, and care for these young, innocent girls rather than use them as described. A later article addresses the impact of this policing of men’s behavior by fellow enrollees:

> Perhaps the flaying your correspondent gave the cradle-snatchers of Forest Lake has done some good. Of late, there has been a remarkable falling off in the number of boys who go nightly to the post-office with the mail truck.

The men of the CCC policed each other by calling out behavior that was not deemed manly, and publicity in the *Au Tronicle* helped stop the inappropriate behavior.

Suzik (2005:25-27) argues that enrollees who were not independent, self-sufficient, breadwinners were seen as sissies or weak sisters, men who were effeminate, timid, or cowardly. These ideas combine sexuality with masculinity or manliness. The term "sissy" was never used in the *Au Tronicle,* but questions about their manliness in the face of unemployment must have weighed on these young men's minds, especially as they 'struck out' with women or lacked 'sex appeal.' A 1939 study of CCC enrollees in Massachusetts was reported in the psychiatric journal *Mental Hygiene*. The study noted that between 1933 and 1937, 66 men from CCC camps in Massachusetts went to psychiatric hospitals in Boston (Alexander 2018). The numbers increased over time from 3 in 1933 to 29 in 1937. These men were admitted because they "were sexually maladjusted and developed acute emotional turmoil after various taunts and teasing of a sexual nature. Worry over autoerotic practices and direct homosexual approaches in the camp seemed to be precipitating factors in certain cases" (cited in Alexander 2018:100-101 see also: Chauncey 1994; Lugowski 1999). CCC enrollees would bully each other for not conforming to the expectations of what men should be. For obvious reasons, the newsletters do not contain explicit references to homosexuality. However, a short article stating, "Jones, our steady KP has taken up a new interest and is chasing up football players" may infer homophobia, homosexuality, or both.

### 4.2.5 Hanging out with friends

Another non-supervised activity the enrollees engaged in was hanging out with their friends. When not working or away in town, the enrollees would spend time with friends, playing games and jokes, or listening to music, forms of casual leisure time activities that Walker says the men actually took advantage of. In an oral history about

Camp Round Lake, Jack W Geniesse remembers, “We also had a recreational hall. We had pool tables in there and ping pong tables and also a canteen for the kids. They could buy cigars, cigarettes, candy, whatever. This was the hub of our entertainment” (Geniesse 1983). The hub of the enrollee's leisure activities was the recreation hall.

The recreation hall was centrally located at the southern end of the camp, at the base of the ‘sunburst’ configuration of the camp (see Figure 5). The rec hall contained the canteen, the library, and pool and ping pong tables (Figures 25 and 26). The newsletter describes the rec hall as:

> An attractive and well-stocked canteen invited more than a mere glance, and we found that it contained most of the things we needed. As we turned from the counter to survey the rest of the hall, we discovered a ping pong table and two pool tables.

An article in the *Northlander* dated August 1936 titled “Camp Au Train’s Rec Hall ‘Keeps the Boys at Ease’ While Studying” reads:

Camp Au Train can well be proud of its recreation hall. Recent new additions have improved the library greatly. Six new lounging chairs built and painted a combination of black and Chinese Red by Louis Abromentis adds greatly to its already splendid appearance. ... With the library as it is and with two pool tables and a ping-pong table, the enrollees have no difficulty in making use of their leisure time, profitable. A fire place at the south end of the canteen room adds to the neat appearance of the room. The walls of the room are furnished with celltox with a half way siding wainscotted with knotty pine.


Figure 25: Photo of the western end of Camp Au Train's Recreation Hall showing two pool tables, a piano and the stone fireplace (Provided by David McNeil, Christmas, Michigan, Hiawatha National Forest Collection, IHA Archives, Michigan Technological University).

Figure 26: Camp Au Train's Recreation Hall showing two Ping-Pong tables (Provided by David McNeil, Christmas, Michigan, Hiawatha National Forest Collection, IHA Archives, Michigan Technological University).


Figure 27: Camp Au Train's Library at the eastern end of the rec hall (Provided by David McNeil, Christmas, Michigan, Hiawatha National Forest Collection, IHA Archives, Michigan Technological University).

The rec hall was the context for many unstructured leisure activities the enrollees engaged in. This can be seen clearly in the archaeological record. The clearest evidence is the eleven ping pong balls that were found (Figure 28), but many soda and beer bottle caps and candy wrappers evoke leisure time. A total of 1,017 crown caps were found in Features 6 and 23, accounting for 12% of the total assemblage from these two features. When the candy wrappers are added into the mix, that total goes up to 16% of the entire assemblage. There were many different soda and beer brands at Camp Au Train, including Atlas, Pfeiffer, Stroh, Coca-Cola, Orange Crush, Schlitz, Wegeners, and Sun Drop (Figure 22). Of the 351 identified crown caps, 221 (63%) were from beer. This is interesting since several oral histories state that beer and alcohol were not allowed in camp. The amount of beer, pop, and candy bar wrappers lend credence to this less structured leisure time. These artifacts are items that could be acquired at the canteen or from area stores and brought back to camp.


Figure 28: Ping Pong Ball from Feature 6D. (Photo by Wurst)

Other evidence for the casual hangout that the men enjoyed lies in the archaeological evidence for smoking. A total of 102 smoking-related objects were found in the CCC-era features. These include several paper cigarette packages, both individual and humidor tobacco cans, the mouthpiece from a pipe, and eleven glass cigar tubes (Figures 29 and 30). All of this data indicates the everyday leisure activities of these young men, hanging out while playing ping pong, drinking their Atlas beer, eating their Powerhouse candy bars, and smoking their pipes and cigars.


Figure 29: Dial Tobacco Tin from F23. (Photo by Wurst)


Figure 30: Glass Cigar Tubes from Feature 6D. (Photo by Wurst)

Other forms of recreation were popular but left no trace in the archaeological record, such as listening or playing music, cards, and practical jokes. Radios were present in the camp, although no tubes or other parts were found in the excavated features. The *Au Tronicle* has a couple of excerpts about the use of the radio. In the August *Au Tronicle* the newsletter states:

> Hear ye! Hear ye! Hogendy said his radio would play if he had new tubes, a new speaker, and several other items too numerous to mention. He would save lots of time and worry if he bought himself another radio. A man of his high standing should be able to afford such a small thing as that.

This article is interesting because it suggests class differences within the barracks. Hogendy is ridiculed by his barracks mates because he is being cheap about fixing his radio, especially since he is a man of high standing.

The men also used radio music for dancing. In the June *Au Tronicle* article describes a dancing exhibition in the barracks as well as how much emotion music evokes in the men. The article reads:

> On Wednesday nights, anyone who cares can witness a dancing exhibition in barracks 2. "Shadow" Berman, Johnnie Surma, Fred Gibbs, Louie Hayes, and a few others are Hit Parade fans, and the music inspires them with such joy that they must dance to have an outlet for their emotions.

This provides a very specific example of how the men would hang out in the barracks with the radio blasting the hit music of the time. The men are described as dancing with joy, an interesting comment because men are seldom associated with showing emotions in this way. The radio provided an activity that allowed these enrollees to hang out in their barracks in an informal manner.

Other evidence suggests that enrollees formed bands and played music. An article in the *Au Tronicle* advertised for more men who could play music. The article reads, "Wanted more musical instruments. We now have a guitar, banjo, a harmonica, and once in a while we obtain a mandolin." These men could be playing informally in their barracks or c combining their musical talents in the form of a band (see Figure 31). However, it is important to note that the music was a place of friendly jabs. One example is when Tarzan was called 'off' for the musical instrument he played: "Tarzan, when

asked the time, willingly gave it, but said he might be a little off. To which a voice from the rear of the barracks replied: Anyone who plays a Guitar is bound to be a little off." It's interesting to think that the instruments that these men played had implications for their mental state. The music that these men played and or listened to was an important part of hanging out with their friends in a casual setting.


Figure 31: Band of Co. 668 from the *Pictorial Review* of the Fort Brady District (Hiawatha National Forest Collection, IHA Archives, Michigan Technological University)

Playing cards was another way that these men would hang out together. The *Au Tronicle* has articles that mention pinochle, smear, pedro, and cribbage. These card games were supposedly 'friendly games' but brought out the competitive spirit in the enrollees. One article states that "Pinnnuckle [sic] and pedro seems to be the main diversion around this barracks. We challenge any competitors from neighboring barracks.

This competition is also highlighted in another article: “If by any chance you happen to be passing the back end of Barracks four and hear such things as Crook, cheat, thief, don’t be alarmed as it is only Malnar arguing over a couple of points in a friendly game of smear.” This article makes fun of this competition; Malnar is obviously taking this ‘friendly’ game too seriously, getting angry, and calling people crooks, cheats, and thieves. It is important to note that while competition is part of these games, being too competitive results in being made fun of.

Another way the men interacted with each other was by playing pranks. Although there is not a lot of talk of pranks in the *Au Tronicle*, it does happen. One article in the November *Au Tronicle* from Barracks One says, "The new men who came in this barracks last month enjoy staying here in spite of the jokes and pranks played on them.” This points to some expectation that these pranks might have broken some enrollees and forced them to quit. However, the new enrollees stayed; this might point to the fact that these new enrollees can ‘take it’.Another article in the October volume of the *Au Tronicle* states, “Schiutema has been having lots of fun putting pepper in some of the fellows' bunks. Where does he get it?” The archaeological record also alludes to the pranks. Of the 14 candy bars marked by brand name, 3 of them are Jinx. A jinx is a person or thing that brings bad luck. This brand may have been chosen because of the connection with the pranks these men played on each other.

Hanging out with friends took many forms in the CCC, and the enrollees used the recreational hall and the barracks as communal loci for their activities. They would play ping-pong, drink pop and beer, smoke, play music, card games, and jokes on each other.

The men's preference for informal forms of interacting with each other points to a contradiction between the 'productive' use of leisure time expected by the CCC authorities to 'make them happier men' and the more informal, less structured, and supervised forms that the men gravitated towards as documented by Walker's survey discussed above.

### 4.2.6 Summary

Recreation and leisure was an important part of the enrollees' everyday life. They played sports, lifted weights, read, and worked on the newsletter, went to town to interact with women, and hung out with their friends. The camp authorities tried to push the enrollees towards 'productive' ways to spend their leisure time, that would develop 'marketable' qualities for future jobs as US citizens. According to Walker, the CCC men actively pushed back against these pressures Since the "organized activities were poorly conceived and lacked a plan."

Instead, the CCC men preferred less controlled, structured leisure activities, especially going to town to meet women, and hanging out with friends in the rec hall. This allowed them to shed the discipline and watchful eye of the camp authorities. However, the fact that these newsletter reports of sports, interaction with women, card games, and jokes were public shows that they worked as a form of surveillance.

The enrollees' preference for unstructured leisure activities can be seen in the archaeological materials of these men's everyday life. These men used toiletries to enhance their appearance, drank a great deal of soda and beer, ate candy bars, played ping pong, and smoked tobacco. They bought and consumed brands marketed towards certain

values of what a man should be. Their rejection of structured leisure can be seen as an intentional pushback against the constant discipline and control that the CCC had on these men's lives.

## 4.3 Study

I use study to examine the education programs in the CCC at Camp Au Train, which includes formal classes and lectures in the camp. These programs functioned as an Ideological State Apparatus to build men, teaching them skills such as spelling, typing, correspondence, welding, woodworking, radio maintenance and repair, and mechanical drawing, to make them more employable, good citizens, obedient, and patriots (Gorham 1992; Suzik 2005; Tocci and Ryan 2022)(Figure 32). They were designed intentionally to censor any radical thought (Gorham 1992:23; Gower 1975; Suzik 2005).

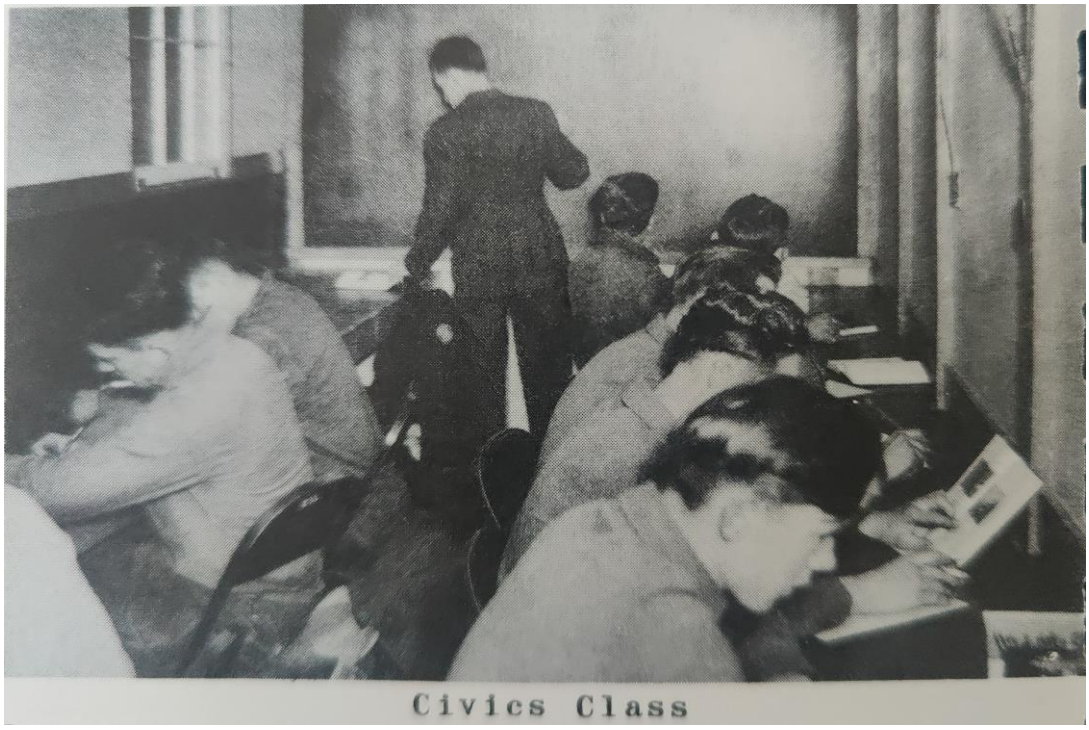



Figure 32:Camp Au Train Civics Class in the *Pictorial Review* of the Fort Brady District (Hiawatha National Forest Collection, IHA Archives, Michigan Technological University)

Suzik (2005:11) states that the CCC was "the college campus of the working-class people." The program argued that it was through CCC training that jobless boys could attain manhood since the training would help them be employable, creating a man who could be a breadwinner. This goal was achieved through vocational programs, which intersect with the conservation work program. Even though study figures prominently in the CCC, they were not always focused on education, and there was a lot of trepidation about what type of education to provide. There were radical shifts over the history of the program about what the educational program should be. By 1937, the CCC pushed to not only teach enrollees how to do daily jobs but also make them more employable in the future (Alexander 2018:89).

Figure 33: Forestry Class at Camp Au Train from the *Pictorial Review* of the Fort Brady District (Hiawatha National Forest Collection, IHA Archives, Michigan Technological University)

While these are the stated goals, there were a lot of problems with the education system that the CCC tried to implement. There were lots of conflicts between the Army and the Educational branch that led to changes in the education program over time, and the animosity between the education advisors and the army officers was a struggle for power within the CCC branch administration. Before 1937, the educational advisors had 6 guidelines that they needed to follow (Suzik 2005:231):

1. Develop in each man his powers of self-expression, self-entertainment, and self-culture.
2. Develop pride and satisfaction in a cooperative endeavor.
3. Develop as far as practicable an understanding of the prevailing social and economic conditions to the end that each man may cooperate intelligently in improving these conditions.
4. Preserve and strengthen good habits of health and mental development.

5. As much vocational training as is feasible, but particularly by vocational counseling and adjustment activities, to assist each man better to meet his employment problems when he leaves camp.
6. To develop an appreciation of nature and country life.

These goals left a lot of wiggle room for education, and the education advisors pressed for a more open way of teaching. Some of these goals fit perfectly with the CCC, such as cooperation, strengthening the health and habits of the men, vocational training to meet employment problems, and appreciation for nature and country. However, point three is extremely interesting since it opens the door to discuss the economic and social conditions in ways that might challenge the authority of the program and the government. Given that one of the goals of the New Deal was to curb anti-capitalist sentiment during the economic crisis, this educational goal is astounding. Goal 3 left a lot of room for the educational advisor to maneuver. C.S. Marsh, the first national Educational Advisor, intentionally fought for this broad interpretation. He had to get these program parameters passed by the US Army before they could be implemented nationally. It is in the vagueness that shows potential conflict between the US Army and the education departments (Suzik 2005).

An educational advisor who was unsure what he should be teaching given the intentional vagueness of the goals as first drafted asked, "What are we trying to teach these men?" to which C.S. Marsh responded with the simple, "Anything they want to be taught. *I repeat anything they want*" (cited in Suzik 2005:246, italics added). These are some powerful words given the openness of the third educational program goal. I cannot help but think about the tobacco tins found at the site, with their connection to working

class and labor sentiments and the CCC strikes that are seldom mentioned. These men may well have wanted to learn different things than the CCC administrators had in mind.

This conflict between camp authorities indicates that the situation is more complex than what is commonly thought in simple top-down vs. bottom-up dichotomies. A Field Representative for the American Association for Adult Education stated,

> I have observed a tendency both on the part of the corps area army officials and camp commanders to discourage frank discussion in the camps. They have, in general, an almost panicky fear of 'agitators' and of books which might stir up uncomfortable discussion. (cited in Alexander 2018:84).

Some officers feared the very idea of sociology books, and the educational advisors under these officers felt inhibited (Alexander 2018:84 see also Gorham 1992). CS Marsh obviously thought these types of discussions should be allowed, while the US Army Officers feared this openness and thought it would diminish discipline, order, and their ability to control the men. Alexander also discusses the power struggles between the education advisors and officers. He makes it clear that the officers were empowered to control everything that moved in the camps and that using the word advisor served to remind one of that (Alexander 2018:83; Gower 1975). Another example of this struggle was the CCC director's ban of the book *You and Machines* (Gower 1975:278). In this booklet, machines were becoming the masters of humans, controlling how they are allowed to interact in the workplace. This book was banned, arguing that it might induce a desire to destroy our present economic and political structures, which are held to be responsible for present conditions" (Alexander 2018:85).

Given this conflict, this CCC education program was eventually gutted and replaced with a more controlled program in 1937 (Gorham 1992; Suzik 2005; see also: Tocci and Ryan 2022). The new program was more explicit that their goal was not only to educate men with work skills but also to keep any radical thought completely out of the pedagogy. At this point, the CCC had a clearer focus on education (Alexander 2018; Suzik 2005). The slogan "every man a student" became common after the shift of pedagogy, and enrollees had to take a pledge to attend at least one class each week (Alexander 2018:88). Suzik echoes this position, stating: "The voluntary nature of the educational program would, for instance, be replaced with mandatory participation by both work supervisors and CCC boy recruits alike" (Suzik 2005:249). The "free-wheeling unstructured" and democratic learning first phase of CCC education was over. It was replaced by a top-down, rigidly structured education that claimed to set "sights more directly on the wants and desires of the enrollee population writ large" (Suzik 2005:249). This intentional shift in pedagogy can be seen as a response to the dangerous open-ended education, justified by the 'failure' of the education program. However, it should be clear that this 'failure' was propaganda to justify making a more targeted, less radical pedagogy.

The clearest evidence that education was not an initial priority of the CCC is the spatial location of the education building. The Education Building is located on the periphery of the camp, to the north of the 'sunburst' shape of the barracks, and is not oriented the same as any other building at the camp (see Figure 5). This spatial location certainly makes it seem as if the educational programs were an afterthought, suggesting a lack of interest. It is revealing that the earliest trash pits in the Feature 6 area are located

right next to the education building, and later, trash pits were located further away. The changes in the location of 'trash' might reflect these shifting ideas about education and the animosity between educational advisors and the Army officers.

Given the propaganda about the CCC's education program, it is unsurprising that educational activities are frequently shown in the CCC *Pictorial Review*. The *Pictorial Review* devotes two entire pages and includes 15 photographs of Fort Brady's educational activities. These photographs show classes in spelling, forestry, photography, typing, mechanical drawing, sign making, radio, and woodworking. There is little archaeological data that relates to education at Camp Au Train, and there is little mention of education in the *Au Tronicle*. One glimpse is a photographic chemical bottle that was found in Feature 23. A photograph in the *Pictorial Review* from Camp Sidnaw shows a photo class. An illustration on a page for "candid shots" in the *Pictorial Review* suggests that the enrollees may have had different interests in photography than the educational advisors (Figure 35).

Figure 34: Photographic Activity at Camp Sidnaw from the *Pictorial Review* of the Fort Brady District (Hiawatha National Forest Collection, IHA Archives, Michigan Technological University)

Figure 35: Illustration from the “candid shot” page from the *Pictorial Review* of the Fort Brady District (Hiawatha National Forest Collection, IHA Archives, Michigan Technological University)

Education demonstrates the struggle between different groups of CCC administrators at odds with commonsense ‘top-down’ perspectives. These contradictions become key relations to understand the CCC as a whole. I think it is important to recognize these contradictions and the transformations in the education that these men received over time. It is interesting how little evidence exists that deals with the enrollees' experience in the education program. Few artifacts relate to education, and these activities are seldom mentioned in the newsletters. I can’t help but wonder whether this

lack of involvement relates to the lack of interest these men had in the CCC's approach to education as propaganda.

## 4.4 Health

The final way that the CCC structured the lives of enrollees is around health. Health relates to both the enrollees' physical and mental condition, which are dialectically related. Hygiene, personal appearance, physical conditioning, food, and medical treatment all fall under this issue. The CCC had strict standards and rules for admission to the program (Gorham 1992). Captain Jernberg "gleefully" documents the CCC's process for the pre-entry check-up, stating that a survey was made of the body. There was little chance for imperfect or deformed boys to join this organization (Gorham 1992). Physically or mentally incapacitated applicants and those few who were homosexual were immediately weeded out and sent home. Those who showed signs of carrying sexually transmitted diseases were also dismissed (Gorham 1992:242; Suzik 2005:103).

The enrollees were subject to periodic medical examinations as a way to control and discipline them (Gorham 1992:240). The mandatory checkups were to make sure that the men were medically and scientifically managed. This idea of scientifically managing the working-class body has parallels in physical education in public schools and public baths (Harris and Robb 2012; Hoagland 2010, 2011; Williams 1991). The CCC men were scared of these check-ups since they had real implications in their lives:

> Most guys were pretty well scared… they didn't want to lose their job, and they didn't want to come up with any disease of any kind." (Suzik 2005:100-101).

The sight of the medical doctor could bring on nerves even to the point of passing out. There were reasons for these men to be scared of a failed medical checkup which would take away their ability to have a job, putting them back in the same position that they started. This could be harder for enrollees who were already in the CCC since it came with a dishonorable discharge. The offers attempted to dominate the enrollees with fear and shame that would follow the enrollees all of their lives. This idea is reinforced by the 23rd Psalms applied to the CCC presented in the introduction: "Surely, threats, extra duty, and AWOL fines will follow me all the days of my CCC career, and I will dwell in the house of fear forever." This sentiment of fear linked to medicine comes through in the *Au Tronicle* as well:

> The worst is over now. The third shot for typhoid fever was given on October 28, and the fellows are glad. Three years from now, if they are still in the CCC, they will receive three more shots, but the boys are not worrying yet.

Medical care at Camp Au Train centered on the dispensary, which was located right next to the army barracks at the base of the sunburst. This spatial location emphasizes the connection between control and medical care. With the army barracks right next to the dispensary, anyone who went in for medical treatment could be noticed by any of the army staff who were nearby.

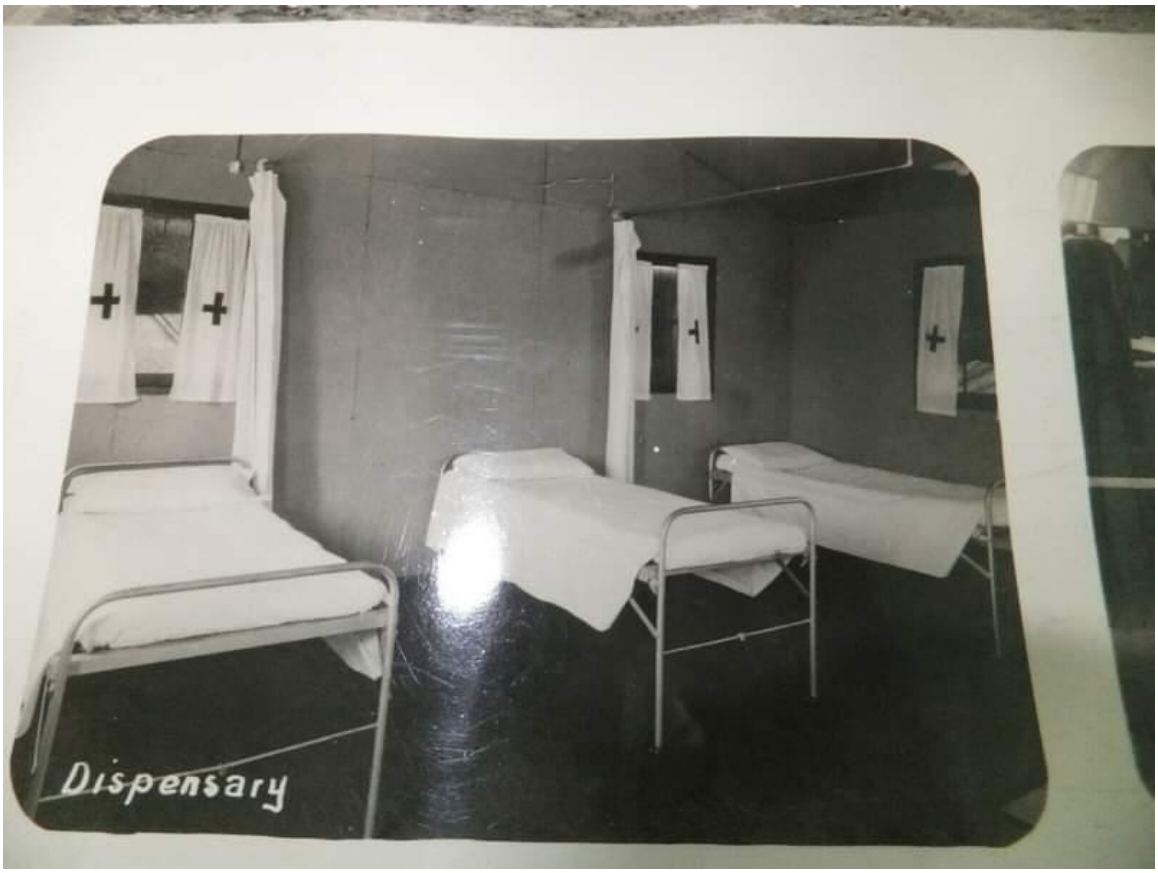



Figure 36: Camp Au Train Dispensary (Provided by David McNeil, Christmas, Michigan, Hiawatha National Forest Collection, IHA Archives, Michigan Technological University).

One article in the July 1936 edition of the *Northlander* states that there is no need for a hospital at Camp Au Train since "there was no time lost because of accidents," the second month in a row "in which there have been no accidents disabling any member of the various work crews." Thus, health and work are closely connected even though there is very little discussion of the dangerous nature of CCC work in the *Au Tronicle*, aside from the discussion of firefighting noted above. There are also few mentions of illness or use of the dispensary, and they tend to be very brief:

> Of late, the barracks has been very quiet. Prause, our cut-up, has been in the hospital.
>
> Schallhorn is confined to bed in the hospital due to a bad cold.
>
> Barker got tired of staying in the hospital so he quit holding the thermometer near the stove.

Given the fear of illness and the threat of discharge, it is not surprising that there is little mention of illness in the newsletter. However, we did find archaeological evidence that connects to these practices. Feature 23 contained fragments of a medical thermometer and at least three glass ampoules that could have been used for the shots that put fear into these enrollees.

### 4.4.1 Physical Appearance and Cleanliness

Other aspects of health deal with physical appearance and cleanliness. It is only through CCC discipline that a man can be made, and this discipline was partly imposed through the control of physical appearance. According to education advisor Walkenhauer the CCC man must always be neat and orderly, and presentable. How a man dresses shows the happiness in their life; if they are disciplined and look good, they will be happy. This happiness is the point of life; it will also breed contentment in the CCC man. A contented CCC man will also be a good citizen of the US, an asset to the country. The discipline required to stay clean and look good will produce a contented man. As part of the ideological state apparatus, disciplined, contented men are less likely to challenge the status quo and question the reproduction of the relations of production (Gorham 1992). Some enrollees adopted this ideology, shown in the June 1936 edition of the *Northlander* an article called “Our Future” Lerenso D Kiersey states:

> Look around you and the fellow who is neat, hands clean, face clean, hair combed, and whose clothes are clean, and well kept, and there you will find the fellow who has personal pride and finds enjoyment in knowing that he is presentable wherever he may be. This is an investment in the future. It is training for when you return to your homes and are in contact with friends, neighbors, and employers.

He clearly states that this discipline instilled by personal appearance is an investment for future employment. It is also interesting to note that this discipline is enforced in a roundabout way by how this article is written. “Look around you” allows the enrollees to compare themselves to others and makes the neat and tidy discipline tangible, which has real concrete meaning in the enrollees' lives. This tactic to police each other about the correct way of living shows that the enrollees literally embody the ideological state apparatus.

This can also be seen in the camp showers, were the enrollees policed each other's hygiene and personal appearance. The showers at Camp Au Train are communal, much like the showers at gyms today. They are a space where men can compare their bodies while washing and provide a place to “look around you” to see whether you are living up to the standard of the CCC or not (Figure 37).

The showers disciplined the bodies of the boys who did not clean properly. If men were not adequately cleaned or if they refused to wash at all, then men would “take justice into their own hands” (Suzik 2005:98), giving these boys a “GI bath”, where the men would be taken from their beds, pinned down or sometimes tied up, and scrubbed until the undisciplined boy was clean. “This was to uphold justice and hold enrollees to a standard of cleanliness and grooming” (Suzik, 2005:98).

While not as aggressive as a GI scrub, there was an example in the June *Au Tronicle* of policing people who were not cleaning themselves. The article states: "G Hayes said he would have taken a shower the other day, but … the water was too hot." This passive-aggressive joke let people know that an individual was not behaving as they should.

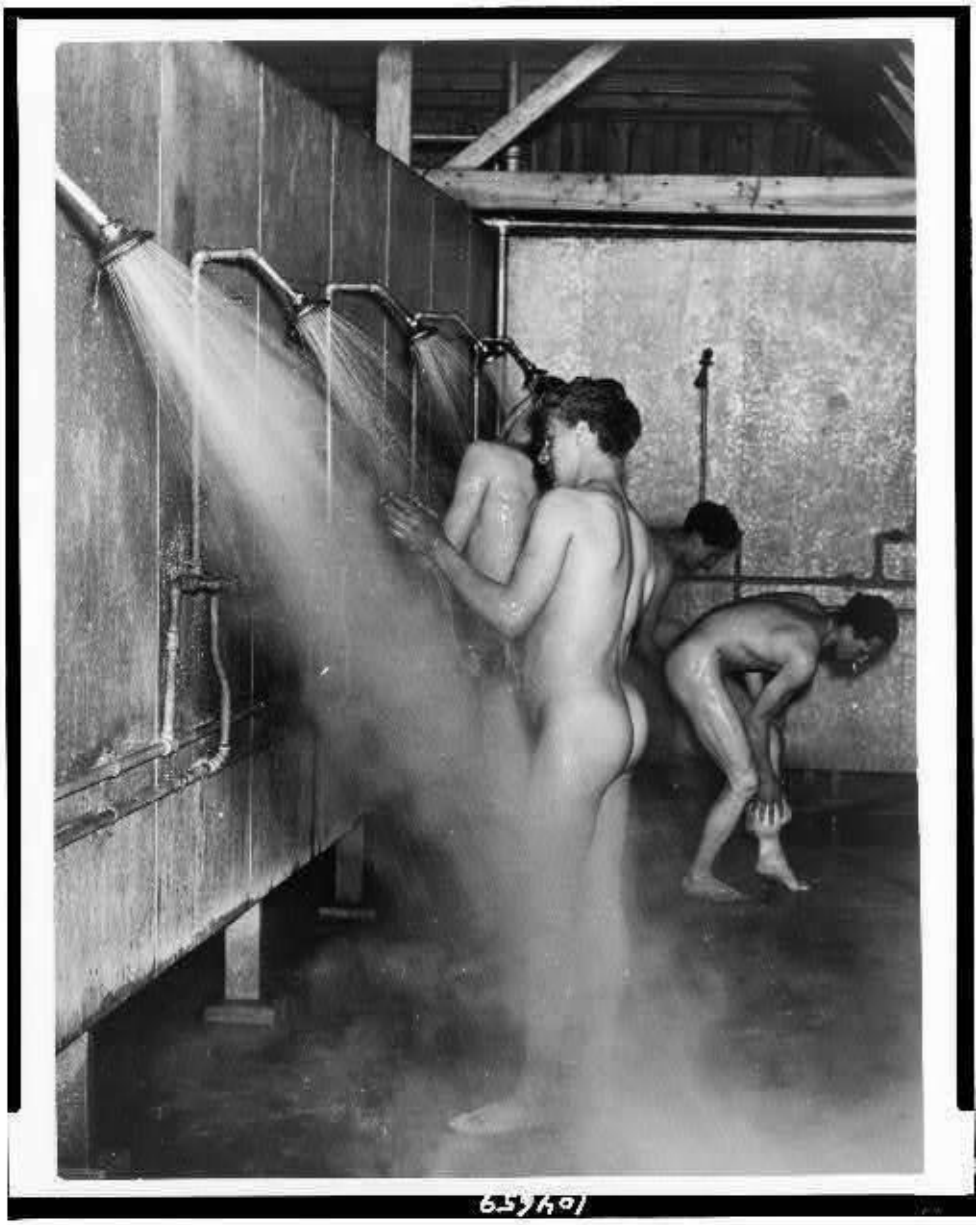


Figure 37: Showers at Camp Au Train (Provided by David McNeil, Christmas, Michigan, Hiawatha National Forest Collection, IHA Archives, Michigan Technological University).

This horizontal violence is again a way to muddy the waters of the enrollee experience. Sure, this could be seen as some sort of funny prank, but for the unclean man who was hogtied in a shower while men scrubbed his body with wire brushes, it might

seem like bullying of the worst kind. This tells us the power that the ideological state apparatus wielded over the men in these camps; while some were willing to fight for their autonomy over their work through strikes and goldbricking, others internalized the ideology by embodied aspects of the GI scrub and shaming enrollees who resisted this imposed control.

A clean body also includes clean teeth. Dental hygiene products are common in the archaeological record. Four toothpowder cans, five toothpaste tubes, and 1 toothbrush was recovered from CCC contexts. Though this was never mentioned in the *Au Tronicle*, there was a picture of a visit to the dentist office in the *Fort Brady Pictorial Review* (Figure 39). A clean body included a clean mouth for these enrollees.


Figure 38: Colgate tooth powder can from Feature 6D. (Photo by Wurst)

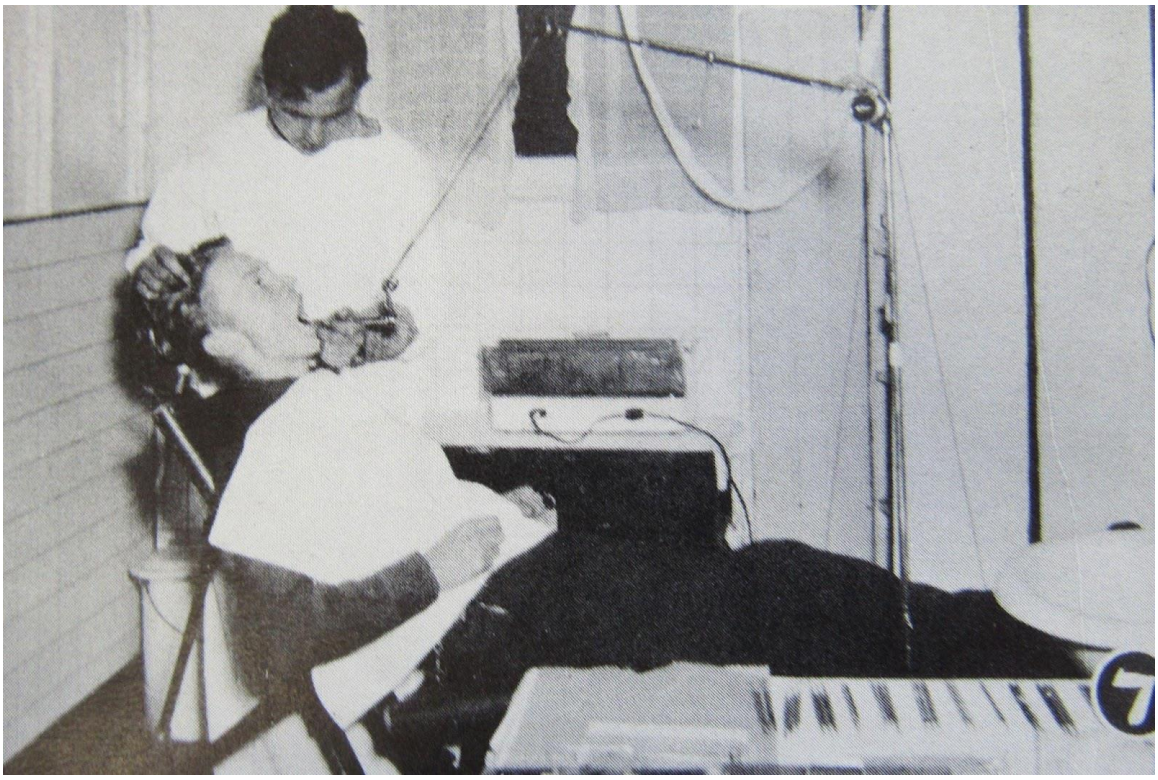


Figure 39: Dentist Office Co. 3604 from the *Pictorial Review* of the Fort Brady District (Hiawatha National Forest Collection, IHA Archives, Michigan Technological University).

### 4.4.2 Exercise

Exercise and physical condition relate to health and are another aspect of discipline instilled into these men in the CCC camps. I have already discussed physical development in the context of play, but it is also necessary to connect this to health. The fetishization of the male body is a key aspect of the CCC from its inception. As Suzik notes, "the earliest days, selected enrollees went through initial processing and two weeks of conditioning at nearby Army outposts before being shipped to their camps (Suzik 2005:83). This conditioning was continued in the camps. Multiple oral histories and second-hand sources discuss the conditioning and discipline of the male body in the

morning before work. The morning started with a routine of exercise, followed by a hard workday outdoors, with more exercise encouraged after the workday.

Lt. J.F. Quinn discussed these ideas for a camp on Isle Royale in the July 1936 *Northlander*. He developed a system of exercise for the 130 boys where they would hike, lift weights, swim, and chop wood. This exercise would complement their labor and strengthen their bodies and minds. He goes on to say that this exercise contributed to the boy's weight gain. According to him, 80% of the men gained 10 pounds in their first month, and nobody lost weight. He believed that this is evidence of the benefits of physical conditioning. After a summer on the Island, they will be "fine examples of young American manhood." The focus on building a healthy body, putting on weight through physical activities, and discipline is what will transform these boys into good American men.

### 4.4.3 Diet

Weight gain, food, and diet are the final way health was pushed at the CCC camps. Weight gain was a favored way the CCC used to measure success and, in this case, an enrollee's health, probably because it was easy to document. The men's average weight gain is presented in almost every text about the CCC to demonstrate just how healthy the CCC made these men. This average weight gain as a rallying point for CCC success rests on the vast amount of food consumed by the enrollees. Charles Rivers (chapter 4) attributes this health focus as "Regular habits of work, training, discipline, fresh air, and 3 meals a day combined to improve the health and morale of all enrollees." This quote points out that 3 meals a day plays an important role in improving the health and morale of the enrollees. These sentiments are also echoed in Sigfried Fandrick's oral

history, where he said that rations came in from Fort Brady and were supplemented with perishable local foods like bread (Fandrick 1991). Kenneth Arndt remembers that the camps always had fresh fruit and vegetables that were delivered by truck from individual wholesalers (Arndt 1991). However, he says that when they could not get fresh fruits and vegetables they would have cans of them instead, this speaks to part of the sheer mass of cans that were found in the archaeological record. He also said that his favorite part of the food was that there was a lot of it (Arndt 1991).

Cans and can fragments are the most common artifact type found in the CCC-era features, representing 41% of the total assemblage (Figure 40). Whole identified cans include institutional sized #10 cans (31), oval meat cans (7), and milk cans (13) (Figures 40-42). The vast amount of food represented by these cans indicates the importance of diet to the health of the enrollees. Milk's association with health and goodness is undoubtedly why so many milk cans were found, as were cream bottles from nearby dairies in Gladstone and Manistique (Figure 43).

Figure 40: Sample of cans from Feature 6A (Photo by Wurst)


Figure 41: Meat can from Feature 6A (Photo by Wurst)

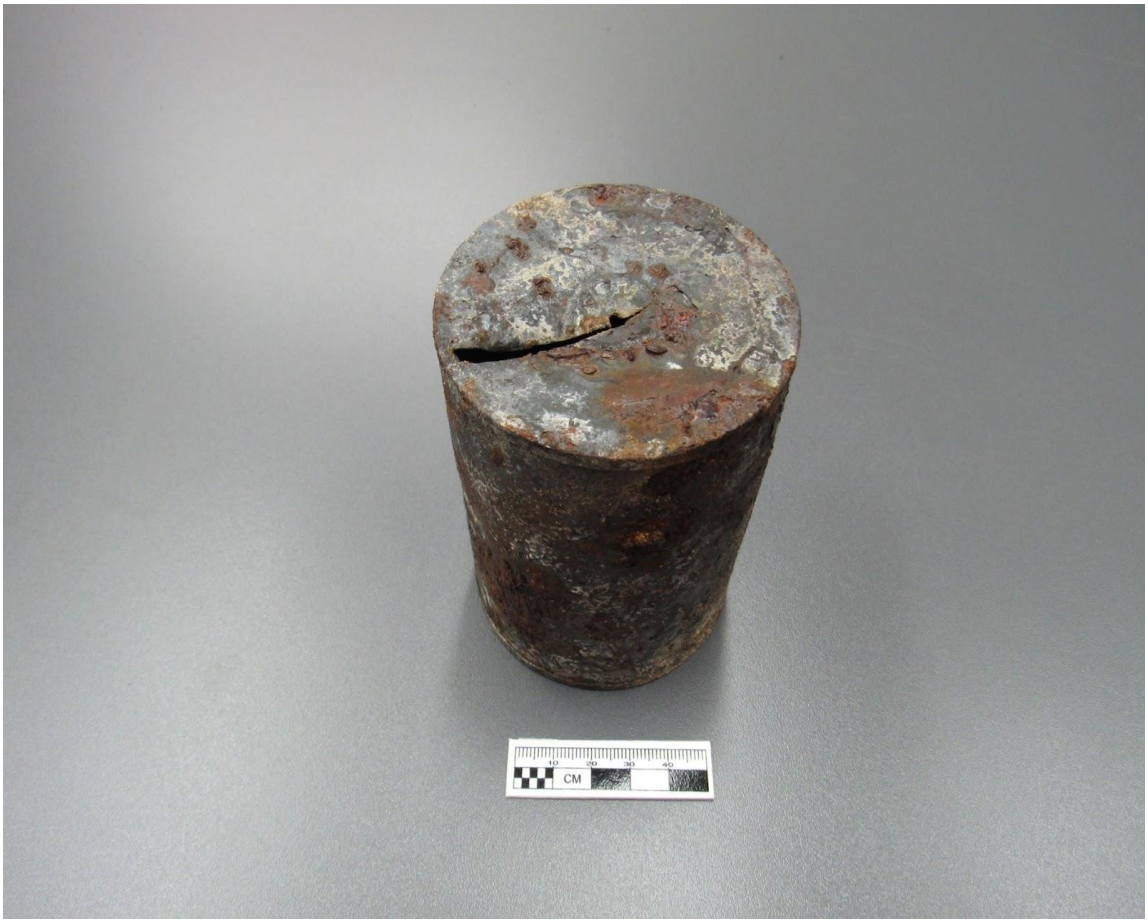



Figure 42: Milk Can from Feature 6A (Photo by Wurst)


Figure 43: Cream bottle from the Scott Dairy in Gladstone found at Camp Au Train (Photo by Wurst)

Many articles in the *Au Tronicle* talk about the food served: bacon, French toast, cakes, eggs, rice, and ice cream. The list goes on, but the sheer mass of food made and consumed at these camps would be the main factor in weight gain. There was also infrastructure to ensure the food was kept as long as possible. The *Au Tronicle* notes that "With the root-cellar nearing a finish, the cooks are beginning to quake in their shoes. Lt. Traub threatened to move them into the cellar and put the potatoes and such in the back of Barracks four." This root cellar can be seen on the landscape and is located just to the northwest of the rear wing of the mess hall (Figure 44). This infrastructure, added later than the initial creation of the camp, puts a focus on the shifting needs for the food at the

camp.

Figure 44: Remains of the root cellar at Camp Au Train, view northwest. (Photo by Wurst)

The *Au Tronicle* also printed food menus and ads. One reads “A dinner fit for any king!!! Fried Chicken, Giblet Gravy, Baked Potatoes, Buttered Peas, Coffee, Bread & Butter, Candied Sweet potatoes, Fresh Vegetables, salad, Spice Cake, Ice Cream.” The amount of food is echoed in the *Au Tronicle* with one article in the *Au Tronicle* saying, “In the past six months approximately $300.00 worth of Ice Cream has been served in the Mess Hall.” That would be about $6,343 worth of ice cream in today’s money (Webster 2013). The sheer amount of ice cream, which was notable to the camp members, was just a fraction of the amount spent in Camp Au Train on food. The list of dishes included in

the menu might be for a special occasion or holiday (Figure 45), but it does point out the amount and variation of the food that an enrollee would experience. Another article mentions the excitement around Spanish rice, stating: “TRY OUR SPECIAL DISH OF SPANISH RICE. IT’S DELICIOUS!” (Emphasis in original). It seems that the rice caught on as in a later edition Jim Nelson is quoted saying “The Spaniards should have plenty of Spanish rice by the looks of all the people they are killing off.” All of this food plays a part into the bodybuilding of the men. It is part of their diet and creating a healthy man who is gaining weight.

Figure 45: Camp Au Train Mess Hall probably set for a special meal (Provided by David McNeil, Christmas, Michigan, Hiawatha National Forest Collection, IHA Archives, Michigan Technological University).

### 4.4.4 Summary

The enrollees were expected to have a certain level of health, hygiene, and bodily development and were meticulously checked to make sure they complied with the standards. The enrollees feared these medical checkups and, rightfully, since the loss of employment and the shame of discharge would follow them forever.

The discipline and surveillance were imposed through the rules and regulations about physical appearance but were also imposed through the policing of each other's behavior. These horizontal methods of control and internalization of the ideological state apparatus adds to the complexity of understanding what it meant to be a CCC enrollee. Exercise and physical conditioning were a way to develop the men and discipline the male body. Food was paramount for the enrollees in their weight gain journey which was used by the CCC to justify and document the success of the program. The sheer mass of food that these men ate is the most visible aspect of health found in the archaeological record.

# 5 Conclusion: So, what; Why Does this Matter?

My goal in this thesis is to provide a case study to help fill in the gaps in the commonsense ways that we remember the CCC that emphasize either conservation or masculinity. Instead, I have tried to focus on the everyday life of enrollees in the context of labor, capitalism, and the crisis of the Great Depression. The men of the corps had their lives structured around work, play, study, and health, and these guiding principles had real implications for the everyday lives of the enrollees. This chapter has presented the various threads of data related to each of these issues to look for contradictions between the different sources.

Work was a crucial aspect of the everyday life of these men. The government created the program with the idea that work would conserve the dignity of men while work in conservation, where they could labor while not interfering with the capitalist labor market. However, from the vantage point of the enrollee, it is clear that they did not buy into these ideas of work. Enrollees did not like the work and often tried to avoid it. They used sick days, goldbricked, tried to get assigned other duties, went on strike, or took time off to get out of conservation work. When they couldn't avoid it, they took medications and taped themselves together to get through their days. The enrollee's different vision of labor can be seen in the tobacco brands that emphasize unions and strikes.

When not working, the enrollees were expected to make "worthy" use of their leisure time. In the absence of breadwinning, the CCC used sports to turn boys into men. The government officials would try to control and surveil how the enrollees used their

free time: how men could interact with women and what they would write in their newsletters. The men of the CCC tried to move away from this surveillance; they wanted to be left alone and not have every moment of their life run by the structure of the CCC. The enrollees preferred more informal leisure activities, such as having a beer with friends, playing cards, playing music, dancing, and leaving the camp to meet women. They had very different ideas about the value of leisure activities and wanted to avoid the discipline and surveillance of the CCC.

Evidence about the CCC education and study points out the contradictions of the assumed 'homogeneity' from the government's position. While the CCC has been called the college of the working-class people, with the expectation that through this education program education, jobless boys could become more 'marketable' for future employment, my data contains little evidence of education for the everyday lives of the men of the CCC. What does stand out is the contradictions in the government's internal battles between the US Army and the Educational Department. The education shifted from a program that promoted an understanding of the prevailing social and economic conditions that the Education Department wanted to one that is just about training the enrollee for employment. The Army took control and had the final say at what they deemed appropriate for these boys at the camps to learn.

Discipline was a thread that the CCC uses to control all facets of an enrollee's life, and they used health to further this agenda (Gorham 1992). Health standards were set up by the government to make sure that they could police who was allowed into the program and who could stay in the camps, followed by mandatory checks of the body for

sexual activity, homosexuality, scoliosis, and standards of personal appearance. The enrollees met these checks with fear to the point where some would pass out. The men ate a lot of food and put on weight, data the CCC used to look good. In some cases, the CCC men adopted the program's norms by policing their fellow enrollees to ensure a standard of health.

The way that these camps were structured around work, play, study, and health had real implications for the lives of everyone involved in the program. Using these issues as a way to organize the data, in conjunction with a philosophy of internal relations, provided a different vantage point than the official government narrative and revealed contradictions between the dominant narrative of the CCC and the concrete reality of the men who were engaged with this program.

My argument in this thesis has been that the real experience of the enrollees must be taken into account if we are to see a more complete picture of the CCC. I have argued that it is only by understanding the everyday life of the enrollees in context with the 'top-down' sources and interrogating the contradictions between them that an understanding of the CCC within a larger totality can be made that moves past the dominant ways that we remember the program.

The common ways that people talk, research, and remember the CCC is by touting stories that affirm it as a great government intervention for the working people of this country. Sentiments such as the CCC saved the men of a generation, built better men, created conservation, etc., have all been brought up in this thesis. However, while all of these statements contain a germ of truth, they also oversimplify the social relations that

happen in these camps. If we think of the CCC as only the creation of conservation in the US or as a man-building project, especially in isolation, we miss the forest through the trees; we miss the anti-revolutionary objectives and the connection to capitalism. This breaking up of the whole into smaller pieces is precisely what Ollman warns us about:

> More recently, the social sciences have reinforced this tendency by breaking up the whole of human knowledge into the specialized learning of competing disciplines, each with its own distinctive language, and then by studying almost exclusively those bits that permit statistical manipulation. In the process, capitalism, the biggest pattern of all and one whose effect on people's lives is constantly growing, has become virtually invisible. (Ollman 2003:3).

Ollman points out that breaking the totality into parts leaves capitalism, "the biggest pattern of all and one whose effect on people's lives is constantly growing" (Ollman 2003:3), virtually invisible. The New Deal programs look different when they are connected to capitalism. The New Deal was put into place to stabilize capitalism and end people's rebellions (Zinn 1995:383). These policies had real implications for how the CCC program was structured. The CCC's focus on work, play, study, and health were implemented to reproduce the relations of production for capitalism. Still, few have looked at the CCC and the program's connection to this larger dialectic totality. The vantage points that people often take are common sense assumptions that lead to the reproduction of the ideological state apparatus.

Ollman's warning points to the importance of a theory of internal relations. The theory of internal relations allows me to argue that both sides are dialectically related into a single totality. Dialectical research begins by examining real, lived experiences, and I used the abstractions of work, play, study, health as my vantage points to do this. Only

through the real experiences of these CCC enrollees can we interrogate the contradictions between our assumptions of the past and how people actually lived in the past**.** Examining the contradictions between the enrollees and the dominant ideals of the CCC links to issues related to the state's role in ideology since the CCC was a government-run program. I found Althusser's (1970) discussion of Ideological State Apparatuses a powerful way to understand the role of the state in the CCC and a way to connect this state program to capitalism. The contradictions between these vantage points then allow me to put the separate pieces of the CCC back into the context of capitalism at large. I argue that we need both of these perspectives to understand the CCC.

Chapter 4's analysis of the CCC's structure focused on the enrollee's everyday life. Here we can see the importance of labor and how the CCC has to be situated in the larger context of capitalism and capitalist crisis. To be fair, all of the historical sources summarized in this thesis talk about labor and the crisis of the Great Depression, but they only see this as a single event completely disconnected from capitalism. In Chapter 4, I take the dominant sources that convey the Ideological State Apparatus and combine them with the real concrete existence of the men at Camp Au Train. I hope that it became evident that the dominant 'truths' come into contradiction when the real lived experience of the enrollee is accounted for. The camps were much more complex, and while the dominant narratives we tell today are part of the CCC, they only adopt the surface appearances of the past and leave the connection to the larger totality untouched. We gloss over the strikes that occurred in some camps, the problems that these men saw with the labor that they were doing, the control of all aspects of life through fear and discipline, and the pain enrollees went through on a daily basis because of the fear that

their chance to become a breadwinner could be lost or ‘other options could be worse.’ The enrollees' struggle to deal with capitalism's most recent failure becomes almost invisible from the commonsense approach to studying and remembering the CCC.

When we disconnect the CCC from the dialectic totality, there is no room to talk about how the ideological state apparatus was deployed to stabilize and protect capitalism. Mass groups of men were moved into the woods, pulled away from society, and put to work. The CCC was a tool to remove a reserve army of labor from the pool of workers and a place to quell a group of potentially revolutionary young men. The enrollees were actively trained to reproduce the relations of production; sometimes, they even internalized these lessons, for example, through self-policing, but at other times, they railed against them by looking for ways to get out of the work.

Given that conservation or masculinity have been addressed in isolation, it is no wonder we look at the CCC through rose-colored glasses. From the perspective of the Ideological State Apparatus, it seems obvious that the New Deal was the golden age of the government helping labor (Wurst and Ridarsky 2014). And yet, my research connecting the CCC to capitalism suggests that we should be cautious. As Mattick points out, the CCC was also a tool for stopping radical youth:

> First, it was realized these youngsters, jobless and confronted with the ever-mounting misery prevailing in their homes, constituted a potential menace to Society. By draining off these, potentially, most militant elements into the C.C.C. that danger might be averted and the working class, as a whole, thereby weakened. (Mattick 1935:5)

My approach has pointed out one aspect of everyday life at Camp Au Train to address some of the issues that are missed when scholars adopt conservation or

masculinity as ‘answers’ to the question of what the CCC was all about. I argued that we need to focus on labor and capitalism, but in all fairness, this is also still only a partial view. I have tried to point out some of the missing pieces from a critical vantage point, but in the process have undoubtedly added misunderstandings of my own. For example, I did not address the good memories of how these CCC enrollees remembered their time in the Corps. I recognize this, and this is how it should be. The dance of the dialectic is never done. But I hope that we will approach these sites and contexts with a deeper understanding, different set of perspectives, and questions that will allow the dance to continue.

# 6 Epilogue: Towards the Future

I want to finish my dialectical dance by pointing to contemporary calls for a New New Deal as a vision of progressive social change (Dean and Reynolds 2009:17). People call for a 'New-New Deal' or a 'new CCC' when capitalism's cracks start to show. For example, a survey of the Detroit Free Press shows a slew of articles calling for the revival of CCC-type programs in the late 1950s, mid-1960s, late 1970s, and 1980s. These are all times when capitalism was in crisis and facing confrontation in the form of the Civil Rights Movement, Anti-War protests (Vietnam War), feminist movements, and job collapse. Solutions to these challenges drew on the past. Whether getting 'punks' off the street in the 1950s-60s or putting them to work in the 70s or 80s, the solution to the problem is similar: a new program modeled on the CCC.

Other examples include the Green New Deal, which hopes to avoid planetary destruction through government intervention (Friedman, T. 2019), and presidential candidate Marianne Williamson who also draws on the rhetoric of the New Deal as part of her 'Economic Bill of Rights' (Williamson 2023). These arguments are based on half-truth visions of the New Deal that we accept in the present. The New Deal is reinvented as the 'hail mary' chance for the survival of our collective futures. The irony is that these calls for a New New Deal are based on a critique of the contemporary Neoliberal form of capitalism, a 'bad form' of capitalism, rather than questioning the system of capitalism as a whole. This is another example of the danger of breaking up the whole and ignoring the totality that Ollman reminds us of.

From another vantage point, we can see the New Deal as the life support that kept a bloated carcass of capitalism alive during the Great Depression. We celebrate the government for doing their part to stem joblessness, homelessness, and starvation. This may be true, but it also gives lip service to the working classes while distracting us from those who were actually benefiting: the big businesses, rich, and powerful (see Domhoff and Webber 2011). Much like the bank collapses in 2008, when bailouts were handed out to the exact same classes who benefitted from the New Deal, just enough benefits were 'shared' to keep the workers and everyday people strung along; just the right amount of relief to stem the tide of revolutionary action. As Zinn notes, New Deal policies often get the title socialistic, but "the New Deal's organization of the economy was aimed mainly at stabilizing the economy, and secondly at giving enough help to the lower classes to keep them from turning to rebellion and real revolution" (Zinn 1995:384; see also Bernstein 1968; Domhoff and Webber 2011; Radosh 1972; Wurst and Ridarsky 2014). When we call for New-New Deals or Green-New Deals, we must recognize that we are only treating the symptoms of the system that we keep nursing back to health to repeat the same cycle of abuse for 99% of the world. We lose an understanding of capitalism and the continued stabilization of the system when we never look at the process in its totality. This leaves us in a position where we need to be cautious when calling for these 'solutions' that are based on a half-truth and will ultimately lead to more of the same problems in the future.

The last problem that we face today is that the labor of men is not needed in the same capacity. During the Great Depression, there was the expectation that these jobs for the CCC men would return when the economy improved and when they were older and

finally made into men. However, the program was structured on the recognition that these men represented surplus labor. Their work was not needed in 1930s capitalism in crisis. To fix this problem not only was the CCC implemented but during this period, the social concept of the American teenager was created (Hine 1999:4). During the Depression, these men and their labor were actively removed from the market via the CCC, so they would not compete with male breadwinners. This twin creation of the teenager and CCC enrollee seems to foreshadow the contemporary crisis of masculinity. In today's world, it is becoming increasingly evident that the jobs for men will not be coming back at all. Men's high paying union jobs and manufacturing jobs are being lost on a massive scale in the Global North as capitalist production is being restructured. An example of this mass loss of jobs can be seen in the so-called "he-session" of 2008, where men suffered a loss of 75% of total employment in the United States (Wall 2009; Cunningham, 2018). As Reeves (2023:19) says, "labor force participation among men in the US has dropped by 7% points over the last half-century, from 96 to 89." These situations harken to the Great Depression, where job loss was temporarily addressed by programs like the CCC, which removed young men from the labor pool, reproduced by the creation of the 'teenager'.

The prospects for men's employment have become even worse since the COVID-19 pandemic when 9 million men in their prime working age lost employment (Reeves 2023:19). This contemporary loss of work represents a crisis in capitalism similar to the Great Depression. Since these are the contemporary failings of capitalism that lead to calls for solutions such as a New New Deal, a Green New Deal, and Economic Bills of Rights, our ability to understand the New Deal and the CCC in its social totality is even

more imperative. However, we must also recognize that the social relations in the present are not the same as they were in the past. The problems have a similar tune because they are born from the same capitalist logic, but the social relations have changed. Calling for a placeholder like a CCC, harkening to some mythical time when these jobs will return to the men of the global north, is not a feasible option. The band-aid fixes that we often point to in the past keep the same system of abuse reproduced in the present. I have argued that we need to understand the CCC connected to its larger totality, and this is even more crucial for the present crises of capitalism, the loss of men's jobs, and the crisis of masculinity if we are going to make any meaningful moves toward solving these real problems for the future.

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