

**“TO ENSURE PERMANENCY”: EXPANDING
AND PROTECTING HIKING OPPORTUNITIES
IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY PENNSYLVANIA**

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In November 1938, a headline buried deep inside the “Resorts-Travel” section of the *New York Times* read, “Horseshoe Trail Open: Bridle-and-Foot Path in Pennsylvania Passes Historic Places.” The article described the character of the new foot and equestrian trail blazed by the Horse Shoe Trail Club of Philadelphia. “Instead of succumbing to the temptation to make the trail easy,” the 116-mile trail followed the “highest ridges” through five southeastern Pennsylvania counties, connecting Valley Forge with the Appalachian Trail at Manada Gap, just outside of Harrisburg. Although reportedly “one of the ‘cleanest’ paths of its type in the country,” the Horse Shoe Trail was “shorter than many another American trail”—a reference to the recently completed Appalachian Trail—and, therefore, “must base its claim to recognition . . . on the variety of terrain through which it [ran]” and the great number of historic sites it passed. Finally—if natural beauty and historical relevance were not enough—the trail offered good terrain for “enjoying the Southern

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sport of coon hunting.”¹ Although the article probably did not stand out to readers amid the advertisements for “Vacationlands” and reports that New England was rapidly recovering from a severe gale that had taken 682 lives, the announced opening of the Horse Shoe Trail represented the culminating effort of a diverse coalition of outdoor groups and social organizations from southeastern Pennsylvania, led by an aggressive hiking club committed to building a trail and, according to the club’s president, waging a campaign “to ensure permanency.”²

The Horseshoe Trail Club was part of a Pennsylvania hiking community that began in 1916, when a group of conservative businessmen from Reading founded the Blue Mountain Eagle Climbing Club. The next year, newspaper publisher and well-known folklorist, Henry W. Shoemaker, created the Pennsylvania Alpine Club, a statewide organization with chapters in Harrisburg and several other cities. The clubs were the product of decades of growing, middle-class interest in hiking and nature walking that began with the rural cemetery and urban park movements of the mid-nineteenth century. That interest benefited from increases in leisure and affluence brought by industrialization and the expanded recreational geography offered by extended transportation networks connecting urban populations to rural areas. Finally, the fresh air, back-to-nature, and arts-and-crafts movements invested hiking and time spent in natural settings with widely-recognized meaning in the final decades of the nineteenth century.³

As early as the 1860s, small groups of New Englanders and residents of New York City had come together to formalize their interest in walking, climbing, and hiking. A result of nineteenth-century public enthusiasm for associations coupled with a need for organization, these clubs planned hikes, natural history lectures, and, in some cases, helped build the nascent trail networks of the Northeast. Many of the clubs existed for only a short time, merging with others or simply disbanding when enthusiasm ran low. This was not the case for the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC). Founded in Boston in 1876, the AMC immediately embarked on a strategy of recruiting well-known veterans of surveying expeditions and trail projects, extending membership to women, and planning a diverse agenda of scientific and recreational pursuits that saw membership grow from ninety-two in 1876 to over one thousand by 1898.⁴ Those successes were matched by a number of outdoor organizations that modeled themselves on the AMC, such as the Sierra Club (1892), the Green Mountain Club (1910), and the Adirondack

Mountain Club (1922), all of which maintained membership levels in the thousands throughout the twentieth century.

Although large-scale organization of hikers came late to Pennsylvania, the proliferation of clubs during the first-third of the twentieth century matched or exceeded trends in New England and the Middle Atlantic. Between 1916 and 1930, Pennsylvania's two original clubs were joined by nearly a dozen large clubs, located in Philadelphia, Allentown, Williamsport, York, State College, and cities across the eastern half of the state. Membership in some clubs swelled above 500; the Pennsylvania Alpine Club and Batona Club of Philadelphia maintained membership lists in the thousands.⁵

The basic activity of each club was social hiking in local natural areas. Some clubs met every weekend of the year, with multiple hikes reflecting different terrain and levels of difficulty. Members often gathered during the week for slide shows featuring western mountain ranges, exotic wildlife, or familiar scenes of hawks and wildflowers. A guest speaker sometimes replaced the slide show to argue for protection of Pennsylvania forests, praise the health benefits of walking, or present a quick lesson on local flora and fauna. Once or twice a week, members also met on the trail to help clear brush and



FIGURE 1: A group of Philadelphia hikers enjoy lunch on Berks County's Pulpit Rock. 1940s. Reprinted by permission of the Horse Shoe Trail Club.

improve the walking surface. Participation in a hiking club could entail one, two, or even three days of meetings and hikes each week, placing club life at the center of many members' social lives. This was not unusual, for middle-class experience had always included participation in voluntary associations.

Pennsylvania Hiking Ideology

As with other associations, hiking club members felt a need to justify their commitment and elevate the importance of their actions to guard against the possible perception that they were simply indulging in sheer leisure. Hiking clubs, so it seemed, faced an especially challenging task: investing walking with profound meaning that the uninitiated could recognize and respect. Hikers achieved this by merging and elaborating on the diverse ideologies that had previously promoted hiking, namely, its positive religious, health, and patriotic effects. American experiences in nature had been viewed in religious terms since the 1500s, slowly gaining a positive, deistic value as industrial society subordinated nature to meet its needs. As Roderick Nash notes in *Wilderness and the American Mind*, Americans' struggle to incorporate nature into their moral ideologies has taken many forms. Henry David Thoreau's experiment with transcendental pastoralism may be the most well known, but no less a conventional figure than Gifford Pinchot also celebrated the religious value of nature throughout his life.⁶ Indeed, the dominant, if paradoxical, trend in American religious thought has been to recognize nature's potential for inspiration and rejuvenation while justifying its sometimes destructive utilization.

By the 1910s, the livelihoods and homes of middle-class hikers were sufficiently distant from the hazards of true wilderness to allow for idealized notions of nature. Twentieth-century hikers generally approached the Pennsylvania landscape as Christians, endowed with a traditional sense of the sublime that added meaning to time spent in the woods. The Blue Mountain Eagle Climbing Club regularly held religious service at Dan's Pulpit, a rock formation on the south side of Blue Mountain and included hymns and prayer in their annual meetings.⁷ Speaking to a local newspaper in 1933, a club member remarked, "Our trips have always embraced ... first, the worship of God."⁸ Somewhat less explicitly, religion motivated hikers across the state. "When you leave a beautiful woodland or descend from a mountain," a Batona Hiking Club publication encouraged members, "stop, turn around, and gaze

reverentially awhile. Thank God for the boon our forests are to all mankind."⁹ After a Pennsylvania Alpine Club hike, the club secretary believed he had achieved "a fuller realization of how great are the works of God." In response to low participation rates, a member of the Susquehanna Trailers noted, "If you don't come on the hikes, you miss . . . enjoying the whole rich cosmos that God intends us to enjoy."¹⁰ In the minds of Pennsylvania hikers, clearly, God condoned hiking.

Whether or not hiking truly constituted a spiritual experience, religious rhetoric dominates the early records of several clubs. The need to hold Sunday hikes offers a partial explanation. At a time when many potential club members worked on Saturdays, Sunday became the only day of the week available for long-distance walks. Combining religious service with a hike was an obvious solution, practiced by more than one club. Another solution was to emphasize those nineteenth-century associations of nature with God; in turn, elevating simple, mountain walks to a spiritual act. This was not a disingenuous strategy. As Cindy Aron and Marguerite Shaffer argue regarding vacations and tourism, Americans have often used religion—and self-improvement in general—to justify spending time on leisure.¹¹ Church camps evolved into some of the earliest resorts, tourists travelled the circuit of, what John Sears calls, the nation's "sacred places," and hikers worshipped on the sides of mountains.¹² Regardless of motivation, the rhetoric of religion allowed Americans to recreate without fears of criticism.

Similarly, club members touted hiking's health benefits. According to their purpose statement, the Susquehanna Trailers of Wilkes-Barre formed, in part, "to keep physically fit by walking regularly."¹³ Philadelphia's Batona Club, which emerged out of a city-wide correct posture campaign, encouraged members to "keep your body and mind in tune by proper exercise and right thinking; commune with nature and you will receive messages of hope, beauty, cheer, and courage that will not let you grow old."¹⁴ An article in the Allentown Hiking Club's newsletter *The Happy Hiker*, instructed members, "the next time you climb that mountain, and your chest heaves, and you feel like your lungs will explode, remind yourself, IT'S ALL FOR HEALTH'S SAKE." In part, the clubs' references to health drew from the rhetoric of the nineteenth-century back-to-nature and fresh air movements; however, the twentieth-century reformation of these arguments also benefited from a direct relation to patriotism.¹⁵

For several decades the health of individuals had been equated with the vitality of the state. This relationship had been perhaps most eloquently

and aggressively promoted by Theodore Roosevelt, who, speaking before a Chicago athletic club in 1899, argued that “a healthy state can exist only when the men and women who make it up lead clean, vigorous, and healthy lives.”¹⁶ At the commercial and international level, this “strenuous life” ideology encouraged an industrial work ethic and imperialism, respectively. At the individual level, as evidenced by Roosevelt’s mountaineering and hunting feats, it meant physical engagement with nature, the ever-shrinking domestic frontier of wilderness scattered in pockets around the nation. The leaders of hiking clubs were almost always community and business leaders who spent significant amounts of time indoors and, while not expressing explicitly neurasthenic anxieties, certainly longed for temporary escape from what one Pennsylvania hiker described as “the noise and bustle of business cares.”¹⁷ Their longing for “authentic” experience and concern for well-spent leisure time were elevated during times of war.

Given the mainstream political affiliations of most club members, explicit displays of patriotism were common during meetings and apparent in the rhetoric of publications. Despite this patriotic consistency, war brought out anxieties about the value of hiking during periods of sacrifice. In 1942, the York Hiking Club led a series of Hale America hikes intended to “help York defense workers and all York citizens ‘keep fit’ for Victory.”¹⁸ In the same year, a Batona hiker exclaimed, “In war as in peace. It’s patriotic to keep fit!”¹⁹ In part, these anxieties were generated from the need to use automobiles—and rubber tires and gasoline, both of which were subject to rationing—to access hiking trails. The Blue Mountain Eagle Climbing Club insisted on holding hikes in 1942 and justified the decision in a letter to all members. The letter began “Dear Comrades” and went on to announce that the fall hike would continue as planned:

We hope that our hike, by bringing you health, relaxation, and good fellowship, will strengthen each one of you for your place in our united war efforts. We feel that the genuine love of country that results from hiking in the Great Outdoors nurtures a healthy patriotism.²⁰

Other clubs decided to avoid driving altogether. “After all,” an enthusiastic hiker reminded his fellow members, “hiking is a matter of muscles, not rubber tires and gasoline, and so we need not forego the simplest and yet

most glorious of sports."²¹ These justifications of hiking were repeated in club newsletters throughout Pennsylvania, forging a cohesive ideology that allowed hiking clubs to flourish in times of peace, war, and economic instability.

Expanding Hiking Opportunities

Armed with this ideology, Pennsylvania hikers began to confidently expand their activities to include conservation efforts, most closely-tied to trail building activities. The Appalachian Trail (AT), which ran through Pennsylvania for 229 miles, was the most famous of the long-distance trails. In the late 1920s, the Blue Mountain Club of Easton, under the leadership of Lafayette College chemistry professor Eugene Bingham, completed the thirty-five-mile section of the AT between the Delaware and Lehigh Rivers. By 1931, the Blue Mountain Eagle Climbing Club completed the trail to Harrisburg, another 102 miles.²² The Potomac Appalachian Trail Club and local volunteers finished the remainder of the Pennsylvania section, and the entire length of the AT was completed in 1939. Other long distance trails, such as Vermont's 270-mile Long Trail completed in 1930, predated the AT, but no other product of the hiking community drew such diverse advocates, required as much cooperation and coordination, or gained as much fame.

Somewhat overshadowed by the success of the AT were other efforts at trail building, such as the 116-mile Horse Shoe Trail, constructed by the Horse Shoe Trail Club of Philadelphia. The Horse Shoe Trail Club (HSTC), founded in Philadelphia during the 1930s, was unique among Pennsylvania hiking clubs because its members focused on trail maintenance and protection rather than social outings and pleasure walking. Henry Woolman, a University of Pennsylvania graduate, provided the visionary and organizational impetus for the club and its trail. In the autumn of 1926, Woolman and soon-to-be HSTC secretary W. Nelson West traveled to Gatlinburg, Tennessee for two weeks of horseback riding through the Smoky Mountains. "In the smoky atmosphere of a clear October morning," remembered Woolman some years later, "I spied a tiny [AT] marker on a large balsam tree. . . . It made a lasting impression on me." He returned to Tennessee three times in the next four years to work on "opening the foot trail to horseback travel."²³ Woolman carried those experiences with him on his rides through the maze of old logging

and mining roads that covered the low hills of southeastern Pennsylvania and stumbled upon inspiration:

I rode farther afield and found other ridges with old woods roads and gradually the idea germinated in my mind that here at home we could have a little Smoky Mountain Trail and although the depths of the valleys were in hundreds of feet instead of thousands, the colors of the sunrises and sunsets were just as gorgeous.²⁴

So Woolman set about the task of recreating the Appalachian Trail on the outskirts of Philadelphia.

In March 1934, a handful of hiking and equestrian clubs, as well as representatives from the Pennsylvania Forestry and Parks Associations, gathered at Penn's University Club "to discuss the possibilities of opening a hiking trail and bridle path connecting Fairmount Park with the Appalachian Trail on the Blue Mountains near Harrisburg."²⁵ In part, the group felt they were responding to changes in how Philadelphians spent their increasing



FIGURE 2: Henry Woolman, founder and long-time President of the Horse Shoe Trail Club. 1937. Reprinted by permission of the Horse Shoe Trail Club.

leisure time and recognized "the growing desire to pass those hours in the open air amid natural surroundings."²⁶ Unlike many trail projects of the time, Woolman and those assembled catered to horseback riders as well as hikers.²⁷ Inevitably, this would draw middle-class hikers onto the same paths as those wealthy enough to own, transport, feed, and ride horses. Although nothing prevented a person from enjoying both hiking and horseback riding, the two types of potential recreationists presumably came to the trail with very different perspectives and anticipated varying sets of experiences. Unfortunately, the meeting minutes are silent regarding any perceived conflict between the two types of trail users. Instead, Horse Shoe, the suggested name for the club, reflected hope for a harmonious coexistence between those who traveled on shoes and those who rode on horses.

At the close of the first meeting, the participants appointed Woolman as Chairman, who quickly recruited others to join in the surveying work he had already started on his horseback rides. Crews, under the direction of the Chairman, spent the spring and summer of 1934 temporarily marking the entire trail. Woolman obtained topographical maps for the region and sketched out a "tentative route" in red pencil. "Then I took my automobile," wrote Woolman, describing his early solo efforts, "and skirted the route checking where old trails left the highway, then circling around to the next valley to see where they came out."²⁸ Like many modern hiking trails, Woolman utilized existing paths wherever possible. According to a 1938 guide produced by the Federal Writer's Project, portions of the trail followed "old logging roads, charcoal roads, cowpaths, and paths used by Indians and early settlers."²⁹ Woolman also made extensive use of an unnamed path that once linked the numerous forges, furnaces, and mines of Robert Coleman's Cornwall Iron Furnace.³⁰ When surveys had determined the general path, crews, partially composed of National Youth Administration workers, went to work clearing and marking the trail, borrowing methods of directional and side trail marking from the AT system.³¹ Originally, the path was marked with horseshoes, but the trail workers were forced to implement a system of dots after "it was reported that the men from a broken-down truck were pitching quoits with yellow horseshoes."³² By December, a large and diverse coalition of outdoor groups had contributed time to the project, and the final section of trail at Manada Gap, Dauphin County was complete.

A testament to the enthusiasm of Woolman and his volunteers, the majority of trail work was accomplished before the club was even formalized.

Not until July 1935 did a small group of leaders get together at Woolman's Cressbrook Farm in Valley Forge to found the Horse Shoe Trail Club, Incorporated.³³ According to the articles of incorporation, the club was formed "to open, develop, extend and maintain trails for horseback riders, hikers, mountain climbers and nature students in the wooded and mountain regions accessible from Philadelphia and Harrisburg."³⁴ Almost a year later, HSTC held its first general meeting and reported a membership of 115. In addition to that number, members of the Batona Club, the Nature Ramblers, and the Philadelphia Trail Club maintained sections of the Horse Shoe Trail, establishing the trail and the club in the Philadelphia hiking community and giving others a vested interest in the continuation of both.³⁵

Protecting Hiking Opportunities

Even as the Horse Shoe Trail Club worked to clear its trail and other clubs completed the Appalachian Trail, hikers realized the urgent need to protect the permanency of their work. This typically meant protection of the hiking trail

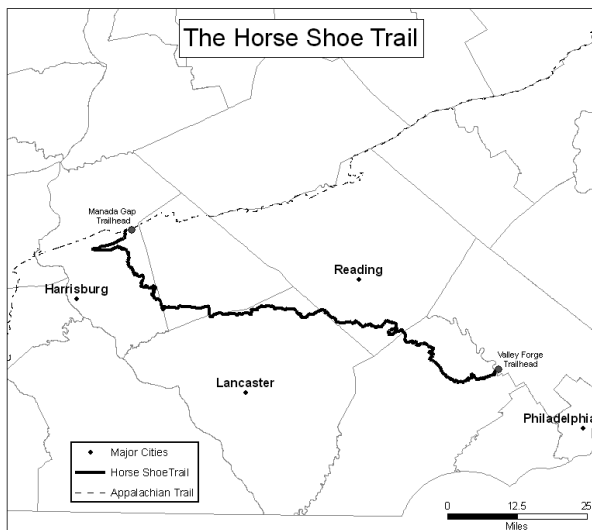


FIGURE 3: The 116-mile Horse Shoe Trail traverses the hills of southeastern Pennsylvania, between Valley Forge, Chester County and its intersection with the Appalachian Trail in Dauphin County.

and trailway, or surrounding corridor, through conservation easements or land purchases. Rhetoric of preservation and conservation had always been central to Pennsylvania hiking ideology. In 1917, Henry Shoemaker, publisher of the *Altoona Tribune* and a dozen or so books on Pennsylvania folklore, founded the Pennsylvania Alpine Club, "where statesmen, bankers and publishers [could] find surcease of business cares amid the sylvan slopes of the monarchs of our Highlands." More importantly, these influential men would, "strive to protect and preserve [the mountains] for future generations of loyal Pennsylvanians."³⁶ Shoemaker's concern for the natural environment of Pennsylvania emerged from a series of trips to the Black Forest, a primitive area in the north-central part of the state, named for the darkly colored virgin pines that once stood there. From 1898 to 1902, Shoemaker traveled the back roads and trails of the large forest, speaking to lumbermen and, as he referred to them, "mountain people," and collecting their stories. Business called him away from the region until 1907, when he returned to continue the work. "But what change those five years had made. Where was the Black Forest?" Shoemaker wondered upon his return. "Miles of slashings, fire-swept wastes, emptiness, desolation, ruin met the eye on every side; the lumbermen had done their work." Return trips to what Shoemaker now referred to in quotes as the "forest," "only accentuated the sense of sadness for the arboreal paradise that was no more. . . . The hand of man had changed the face of nature from green to brown."³⁷ In addition to his disgust regarding lumbering, Shoemaker quickly realized that "the ancient legends which were so easy to hear in 1898" were "difficult to obtain in 1910. What were listened to with seeming indifference then, were listened to breathlessly towards the last."³⁸ For Shoemaker, lumbering, mining, and tanneries were to be opposed for their impact on the landscape and for reasons of, what would later be termed, environmental justice.

Shoemaker and other club members used their newspapers as pulpits for conservation, offering photo opportunities to politicians willing to participate in Alpine Club events and lend support to club causes.³⁹ Shoemaker also served on the State Forest Commission, a position that allowed him to edit the Department of Forests and Waters pamphlet, *In Penn's Woods*, promoting "the natural wonders and recreational facilities of the state forests of Pennsylvania." He used the opportunity to spread word about the Alpine Club, including information on how to become a member.⁴⁰ Although quite critical of the agencies regulating industry in Pennsylvania's forests, Shoemaker worked from within this framework to promote his vision of conservation.

Apparently, Shoemaker and the Alpine Club achieved some successes. In 1921, the club secured a commitment from the State Game Commission to end the poisoning of predatory animals in state forests. The club also gathered data, "in regard to the pollution of streams of the State by paper mills and tanneries, which pollution killed off millions of food and game fish."⁴¹ Club members provided first-hand accounts of fish kills, and professors from around the state condemned the pollution. Like the clubs of the Appalachian Trail Conference and the Horse Shoe Trail Club, the Alpine Club also managed to establish a hiking trail. The club laid out the Darlington Trail, named in honor of Bishop Darlington, minister at St. Stephen's Episcopal Cathedral in Harrisburg and one-time secretary of the club. The trail, probably completed around 1918, followed the ridge of Blue Mountain from the west bank of the Susquehanna River, across from Harrisburg, to Sterrett's Gap, some ten miles to the west.⁴² Although this was a relatively short distance, it proved that hiking clubs could effectively establish and maintain trails, two decades prior to the completion of the AT. In fact, portions of the Darlington Trail were later incorporated into the original Appalachian Trail system.

The task facing Woolman and the Horse Shoe Trail Club was more daunting than the *ad hoc* campaigns of the Alpine Club. Unlike Shoemaker and his colleagues, Woolman did not enjoy influence with the state legislature and its various agencies that might be able to put money towards protection of the Horse Shoe Trail. More significantly, while the Alpine Club's arguments generally relied on acceptance of abstract, ideological statements about the inherent value of nature experiences, protection of the Horse Shoe Trail required acceptance of an agenda of substantive and costly efforts that—incidentally—would also infringe on the private property rights of landowners along the 116-miles of trail. Although Woolman was able to report in 1937 that "[e]veryone along the line has been most helpful, and we are always welcomed as we ride by," permission to cross private property was typically secured through verbal agreement, subject to change at any time, especially when property changed hands.⁴³ At a 1936 meeting, HSTC extended honorary membership to all landowners over whose land the trail crossed, but even property owners well-disposed towards the trail could be deterred by fears of misuse, vandalism, or lawsuits.⁴⁴ Members could chuckle over rumors that "a certain number of well-known persons had fallen off their horses recently," but landowners justly feared trail users sustaining injuries while crossing their land.⁴⁵ Although suburbanization would only begin in earnest after World War II, subdivisions in land were already occurring, complicating the

work of securing permission and making it difficult to cultivate the quality face-to-face relationships necessary to maintain public trails on private lands.

As early as 1938, Woolman recognized the need for strong government protection, in part because of developments on the Appalachian Trail. Since 1931, portions of the AT in Virginia—originally constructed by the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC) from 1927 to 1931—had been displaced by construction of the Skyline Drive and Blue Ridge Parkway in Shenandoah National Park. The road building and subsequent trail relocation were intended to provide emergency relief employment for the thousands of Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) members who lived at the ten camps located throughout the park. Decisions regarding the nature of construction thus came very rapidly, without any input from PATC and other organizations with an interest in that section of trail. Woolman considered the Virginia construction "a precedent for having the Horse-Shoe Trail taken over."⁴⁶ Although Virginia's aggressive use of eminent domain to secure park territory was interpreted by some trail builders as a positive precedent for future railway acquisition, Woolman was concerned with the character of the relocated, CCC-constructed AT.

Unlike traditional footpaths that followed natural grades and—aside from brush clearing and anti-erosion techniques—appeared primitive, the CCC section was a carefully graded tread, created by building up the surface of the trail with a rock frame and filling it with gravel and dirt. Writing in the 1936 issue of *Appalachia*, the journal of the Appalachian Mountain Club, PATC's vice-president and guidebook editor defended the CCC trail work against criticism:

This construction has been criticized as too "artificial" in character, a criticism which raises the question of the requisites of a trail. Perhaps we are getting old, but we do not consider it essential to a true trail to have to step from rock to rock, over every fallen log, or to scramble down a talus slope, watching the ground all the while to avoid falls, or a sprained ankle or broken leg.⁴⁷

"After all," the men reminded readers, "graded trail, even in the East, is not a new undertaking." Appalachian Mountain Club members would have been aware of the late-nineteenth century work of J. Rayner Edmonds, a past club president who constructed a network of graded trails on Mt. Washington and throughout the Presidential Range. They would have also sympathized with

the hiker who complained that walkers on Edmands' trails "streamed up the mountain like a transplanted tea party," and applauded AMC Councilor of Improvements Parker Field's 1900 statement that "In no case has the Club undertaken to make the smooth graded paths or so-called 'boulevards.' Such work is left to others who have more time and means at their disposal than the Club can afford."⁴⁸ In 1936, the leaders of PATC supported the CCC relocation of the AT because they had little choice but to make the best of the situation. Woolman, who had devoted time to developing primitive trails in Pennsylvania and the Smoky Mountains, continued to worry about developments in Shenandoah.

Woolman also monitored Appalachian Trail developments in south central Pennsylvania, where PATC was working with the state to blaze a permanent through trail. This section of the AT crossed the Pennsylvania-Maryland border and passed through Michaux and Mont Alto State Forests and several state parks on its 78-mile path to the Susquehanna River, just north of Harrisburg. "Well-maintained trails traverse the valleys and ridges of both forests so extensively," PATC President Myron Avery then noted, "that the development of the through trail required little new construction."⁴⁹ Still,



FIGURE 4: A portion of Shenandoah National Park's relocated Appalachian Trail. Many hikers within the Horse Shoe Trail Club and the broader hiking community objected to the unnatural appearance of the Civilian Conservation Corps' graded trails. c.1936. Reproduced from the collections of the National Park Service.

the supervising state foresters consciously avoided graded trails. "The trail is to be cut open 9' wide," District Forester W.L. Byers reported to Avery, "all under brush to be removed and then a 3' strip of bare soil is to be constructed in which stones and stumps are to be removed."⁵⁰ In contrast to Virginia's relocated trail, workers would clear a path or expand existing paths but do little more. "The marking party on this section was very enthusiastic about the location of the trail and the work done on the footway," wrote Avery after walking a stretch of completed trail. "There was just enough to make for a very easy walking without its being over-developed."⁵¹

More impressive to Woolman than the primitive character of the trail was the fact that the men building it were employed through New Deal relief work programs. From June 1933 to January 1937, an Emergency Conservation Work (ECW) camp operated out of the Caledonia section of Michaux State Forest, and Superintendent Oscar Book put his men to work on the AT. In return, PATC members marked proposed routes, provided regular maintenance, and created maps and promotional materials for new trail sections. "We have a feeling that this relationship has not resulted merely to the benefit of the Trail Club," Avery wrote to Michaux's district forester, "but that our programs have made some contribution to the recreational activities of the forest."⁵² This working arrangement allayed Woolman's fears of graded trails to such a degree that he wrote to Avery in the fall of 1935 to inquire about the process of securing CCC, ECW, or Works Progress Administration labor for the Horse Shoe Trail.⁵³ Aside from the few National Youth Administration participants who helped mark and clear the trail in 1934, however, Woolman failed to solicit New Deal aid.

If contributions of federal labor would not be forthcoming, perhaps the government would incorporate the trail into its growing park system and thus ease the club's administrative burden. At an April 1938 meeting, Woolman expressed his hope that "some day the whole Trail, with a suitable amount of ground on either side, could be taken over as a State or National Park, in order to ensure permanency." As a first step, he suggested communicating HSTC's desire for takeover to the 18th National Conference on State Parks.⁵⁴ By 1942, the National Parks Association, the Pennsylvania Forestry Association, and various outdoors groups had passed resolutions recommending protected trailway status for the Horse Shoe Trail.⁵⁵ One typical resolution praised the work of HSTC in surveying and improving a trail "116 miles in length, with no fences or gates, no hot-dog stands or gasoline stations, and not more than two miles of hard surfaced roads." The

resolution went on to argue that the Horse Shoe Trail should receive the same protections as the AT and requested that the Secretary of Forest and Waters allocate \$100,000 for the project.⁵⁶ The request went unanswered.

Generating interest in the trail was a never-ceasing activity of the HSTC, more so than for hiking clubs maintaining portions of the AT, for which publicity came easily. It also cost HSTC a good deal of money. In March 1937, the club treasurer reported, "Our largest expenditures during the year have been in connection with publicity work, which," he quickly added, "has been more than justified by the increased amount of interest being shown in the trail by many individuals and groups of individuals."⁵⁷ Most of the money was spent constructing exhibits for outdoor expos, such as the 1937 Philadelphia Sportsmen's Show, and publishing literature describing the club's efforts.⁵⁸ But promotion did not stop there. At one point in 1938, Woolman, also the owner of a large farm, convinced the Dairy Council to promote the club in school lectures in and around Philadelphia.⁵⁹ Further, in 1940, the HSTC directors formed a committee to "encourage the use of the Trail by the Boy Scouts, the Girls Scouts, and YMCA and YWCA, and other organizations."⁶⁰ Meanwhile, the club continued to divvy out maintenance work to regional hiking and equestrian clubs. These actions, taken together, represent a rather shrewd strategy of endearing the Horse Shoe Trail to the southeastern Pennsylvania outdoor recreation community and forging a diverse coalition with a stake in the protection of the trail. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, support for the trail was certainly growing, but government protection would require millions of dollars in property buyouts, eminent domain lawsuits, and administrative fees. Such a program would not only require widespread public support but also influence with the state legislature in Harrisburg.

Every few years, prospects for protection seemed promising, and HSTC mobilized with renewed enthusiasm. In 1945, the Directors encouraged members to contact State Attorney General James Duff, an influential cabinet member, "who has shown some interest in the matter."⁶¹ At the same time, HR-2142, a potential source of money for the railway, was up for debate. By 1946, the new strategy was "to have articles appear about the Trail and what we are trying to do in *Philadelphia Magazine* and other publications."⁶² In an effort to conduct a rudimentary economic impact study, some members were recruited to collect information about overnighers and out-of-state visitors to the trail.⁶³ HSTC went so far as to hire a "Publicity Director" and pay him a retainer of \$200 to run the campaign to gain protection.⁶⁴

When James Duff became governor in 1947, Woolman was pleased to report that the long-time ally was "becoming increasingly interested."⁶⁵ This temporary optimism was stifled in 1949 when Milo Draemel, Secretary of Forests and Waters, reported that "his Department has no time to work on the proposition at the moment as they are all tied up with land acquisition in connection with clean-up of the Schuylkill River."⁶⁶ For a century, the Schuylkill River had served as a conduit for coal shipments coming down from the mountains and into Philadelphia, severely polluting the river with an estimated 38 million tons of culm. Beginning in 1945, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the federal government initiated an environmental remediation effort, known as the Schuylkill River Desilting Project. Engineers, utilizing dams and land acquired from the Schuylkill Navigation Company in the 1930s, hydraulically dredged river water and sediment into a series of large holding basins, where the water slowly seeped back into the river, leaving coal solids behind. The coal was then reclaimed for a variety of uses, and the basins were conserved as green space.⁶⁷ Considered one of the first major environmental cleanups undertaken by a government agency, the project was innovative and successful. For members of the Horse Shoe Trail Club, eager to implement their own version of green space conservation, it was an insurmountable obstacle to the campaign for state funding.

Hopes for government protection were certainly dampened, and, when Woolman passed away in December 1953, the campaign lost its most aggressive proponent. These early attempts to involve the state were incredibly ambitious and anticipated the later strategies of the modern environmental movement to mobilize grassroots organizations, cultivate landowner-trail steward relationships, and lobby government. In the second half of the twentieth century, several organizations built and protected trails and conserved green space by implementing similar strategies and taking advantage of the renewed enthusiasm for preservation resulting from the modern environmental movement. Ironically, HSTC failed to benefit from the environmental ethos emerging in the third quarter of the twentieth century: as of 2010, the Horse Shoe Trail remains relatively unprotected.

Better known are the successes of the movement to build and protect the Appalachian Trail. On the Pennsylvania section, the most active club, in terms of creating and advocating for a trailway, was the Blue Mountain Eagle Climbing Club of Reading (BMECC). As noted above, BMECC constructed a large portion of the trail in the 1930s. In contrast to HSTC, BMECC's strategy was to directly purchase land adjacent to the trail and



FIGURE 5: Members of the Horse Shoe Trail Club walk their trail. 1940s. Reprinted by permission of the Horse Shoe Trail Club.

manage it themselves rather than pursue government protection. Of course, BMECC's efforts benefited from the public's existing knowledge of the AT and general support for the nation's longest footpath. The Appalachian Trail Conference, originally composed of influential newspapermen, businessmen, and academics and increasingly occupied by lifelong proponents of the trail, was committed to lobbying government and promoting the trail in the press—which freed BMECC and other maintaining clubs to focus on local, manageable issues.

In 1937, BMECC created the Blue Mountain Wilderness Park Association to “preserve and protect the wilderness, forest, wildlife, and Appalachian Trail developments on the Blue Mountain.” To do so, the Association planned to “acquire by purchase, lease, gift, grant, devise, or otherwise, such tracts of land as may be available.”⁶⁸ For legal reasons, it was easier for the Association to own land and enter into leases than it was for the temporary presidents of BMECC. The Association declared initial assets of \$100 but was fortunate to receive most of its land as gifts. In 1930, BMECC entered into a ninety-nine-year contract to lease a twenty-eight-acre tract of land in Bethel Township, Berks County. The club agreed to pay twelve acorns a year as a symbolic lease.⁶⁹ In 1939, the executive committee of the Association decided

to buy the land outright for \$275. In 1942, Harry Rentschler, Woolman's BMECC counterpart, willed the Association a thirty-four-acre tract in Penn Township, as well as \$5,000 to be held in trust. Rentschler stipulated that the land must be used as an arboretum, "maintained for school children of that community," and that the interest made on the trust was to pay for maintenance of the tract.⁷⁰ BMECC and the Association followed his wishes, and the arboretum remains a cherished part of the club some sixty-five years later. Unlike many hiking organizations, BMECC, through the Wilderness Park Association, came to possess several hundred acres of land. This shift in strategy anticipated the "corridor protection" movement of the late twentieth century and helped preserve the AT in eastern Pennsylvania.

Clubs replicated, generally to a more limited extent, this type of land management along the length of the AT. They were also helped immensely by the federal government's commitment to assist in the process. As early as October 15, 1938, the National Park Service and Forest Service entered into the "Appalachian Trailway Agreement," a commitment to protect one mile of land on each side of the AT from road building and other permanently destructive activities. This was an important step towards the National Trails System Act of 1968 that authorized the Department of the Interior to protect the Appalachian Trail and the Pacific Crest Trail and the subsequent amendment to the act, the Appalachian Trail Bill, that helped the federal government, in the words of President Jimmy Carter, "work more effectively with the States and the citizens to provide the protection necessary to preserve—and ultimately enhance—this important part of our national heritage."⁷¹ More importantly, the bill provided \$90 million for trailway acquisition.⁷² Meanwhile, throughout the twentieth century, hiking clubs continued to commit countless hours and dollars to protecting and maintaining local segments of trail.

Conclusion

The work of the Pennsylvania Alpine Club, the building and protection of the Appalachian Trail, and the aggressive, yet failed, campaign of the Horse Shoe Trail Club represent three experiences with grassroots conservation. The Alpine Club, enjoying a degree of status and influence greater than most hiking organizations, used a primarily rhetorical campaign, aimed at changing opinion through education and by publicizing specific issues of environmental degradation. While this strategy proved relatively

effective, especially during the early 1920s when Henry Shoemaker was most active, the club failed to balance their conservation and preservation efforts with a dynamic hiking schedule that could energize and engage a broad spectrum of outdoor enthusiasts. Indeed, Arthur Perkins, a dynamo of the early Appalachian Trail movement, once privately accused the Alpine Club of doing “a good deal more talking than climbing.”⁷³ In New England, the foundation of large clubs, like the Appalachian Mountain Club, typically led to the absorption and dissolution of smaller, local clubs. In Pennsylvania, however, the increasingly-limited appeal of the Alpine Club and its abstract approach to conservation and recreation allowed other independent hiking clubs to flourish throughout the state.

Many of these clubs became active in the construction and maintenance of the Appalachian Trail and developed their own strategy of protection. The AT project enjoyed widespread support among the general public, politicians, and the press, freeing maintaining clubs from the arduous task of generating interest and arguing that the trail deserved attention. At the local level, clubs were usually given short, easily-managed sections of trail within driving distance of their club locale. These were familiar hiking grounds, often passing through land owned by neighbors or by interests—government or business—that could be influenced to grant easements or, at a minimum, show some benevolence towards the trail. The most active clubs, epitomized by the Blue Mountain Eagle Climbing Club, purchased and managed land adjacent to the trail to serve as a buffer or to provide hiking infrastructure, such as trailheads or overnight facilities for members and thru-hikers. Cultivating relationships with the community and concentrating efforts on specific sections of trail led to gifts of land, usually willed upon death, or long-term leases based on symbolic payments or certain obligations to maintain the primitive nature of the land. As mentioned above, government commitment and the organizing efforts of the Appalachian Trail Conference and, after 1956, the statewide Keystone Trails Association, also proved essential to tying local victories into the larger effort. Meanwhile, those clubs continued busy hiking schedules that blended trail work trips with long and short walks, backpacking trips, and social events. Establishing a presence on the trails and expanding membership inadvertently served the clubs’ conservation and protection goals while ensuring the viability of the organization.

Finally, the Horse Shoe Trail Club, deemed newsworthy by the *New York Times* yet lacking the celebrity of longer trails or a means of protecting trail lands, adopted a strategy that combined the rhetorical, public relations campaigns of the Alpine Club at the macro-level and the AT maintaining clubs' efforts to conserve land and cultivate relationships at the local level. From the start, Woolman stressed the importance of protection in order to preserve the connectivity and character of the trail. Like the Blue Mountain Eagle Climbing Club, HSTC secured easements and arranged for trail infrastructure. Members directly lobbied the state government to ask for specific funding and, at times, received encouraging signs that state officials at the highest level were committed to assisting the project. The club hired a publicity director, planted stories in local papers, conducted economic impact surveys, and spread maintenance responsibilities among a wide swath of southeastern Pennsylvania outdoor clubs. During all of the hard work, the club managed to maintain and even expand membership levels. Yet, despite their best efforts, the Horse Shoe Trail Club failed in their campaign "to ensure permanency." Although the Horse Shoe Trail remains an integral part of the Pennsylvania hiking infrastructure, as evidenced by its prominence in the greenway and conservation plans issued by regional planning commissions as well as its popularity among the hiking community, the path is continuously threatened by new housing developments, road construction, and the fickle whims of landowners.⁷⁴

The three approaches to conservation noted here indicate the complex strategies of hiking organizations to ensure continued access to natural hiking opportunities. They also indicate the capricious character of success: similar strategies did not guarantee similar successes. In fact, one explanation of the Horse Shoe Trail Club's failure lies in the success of the Appalachian Trail, the Schuylkill River Desilting Project, and other successes of the conservation and environmental movements. The overburdened Pennsylvania outdoor recreation community did not have the capacity and the state government—having proved its commitment to environmental initiatives in other ways—did not have the will to pour additional effort and funds into the protection of yet another long-distance trail. The Horse Shoe Trail Club's efforts should serve as a reminder that for every successful conservation campaign there were thousands of failed attempts "to ensure permanency" that have escaped our understanding of the modern environmental movement as well as Pennsylvania history.

NOTES

1. Allen Will Harris, "Horseshoe Trail Open: Bridle-and-Foot Path in Pennsylvania Passes Historic Places," *New York Times*, 20 November 1938.
2. "Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Members," 28 April 1938, papers of the Horse Shoe Trail Club, private collection. Hereafter cited as HSTC papers.
3. For treatments of these nineteenth and early twentieth-century movements, see Cindy S. Aron, *Working at Play: A History of Vacations in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 4th ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001); and Thomas R. Wellock, *Preserving the Nation: The Conservation and Environmental Movements, 1870–2000* (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, 2007). For a brief history of the rural cemetery movement, see David Charles Sloane, "Mount Auburn and the Rural-Cemetery Movement," in *The Last Great Necessity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1991), 44–64. The popularity of outdoor recreation is intimately connected to the economic, political, technological, and social transformations described in Marguerite Shaffer, *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880–1940* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001).
4. Laura and Guy Waterman, *Forest and Crag: A History of Hiking, Trail Blazing, and Adventure in the Northeast Mountains* (Boston: Appalachian Mountain Club, 1989), 191–92.
5. In 1938, the Batona Club had 3,500 members. *Batona*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Spring 1938), 3, papers of Orestes Unti, Urban Archives, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; In 1924, the Alpine Club had 2,500 members. Simon J. Bronner, *Popularizing Pennsylvania: Henry W. Shoemaker and the Progressive Uses of Folklore and History* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 26.
6. Char Miller, *Gifford Pinchot and the Making of Modern Environmentalism* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2001), 3, 61–62, 192.
7. "Meeting Minutes," 29 September 1940, papers of the Blue Mountain Eagle Climbing Club, Historical Society of Berks County, Reading, Pennsylvania. Hereafter cited as BMECC papers.
8. "Large Boulder Unveiled in Honor of Reading Man," *Reading Eagle*, 26 June 1933.
9. *Batona*, 1932.
10. Hike schedule, February 1959, papers of the Susquehanna Trailers Hiking Club, private collection. Hereafter cited as STHC papers.
11. Aron, *Working at Play*; Shaffer, *See America First*.
12. John Sears, *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).
13. Newsletter, 1941, STHC papers.
14. *Batona*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (April 1934), 9.
15. For a full description of the nineteenth-century health movement and its various manifestations, see Harvey Green, *Fit for America: Health, Fitness, Sport and American Society* (New York: Pantheon, 1986).
16. Theodore Roosevelt, *The Strenuous Life: Essays and Addresses* (New York: Century, 1902), 3.
17. J. Herbert Walker, ed., *The Pennsylvania Mountaineer: Third Annual Publication of the Pennsylvania Alpine Club* (Altoona, PA: Times Tribune Press, 1921), 16.

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18. “York is on the March,” 1942, papers of the York Hiking Club, York County Heritage Trust, York, Pennsylvania.
19. *Batona*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (Spring-Summer 1942), 9.
20. “Letter to Members from D. K. Hoch, President,” 8 October 1942, BMECC papers.
21. *Batona*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (Fall-Winter 1942), 2.
22. Barbara Wiemann, correspondence with author, 29 August 2007. For a guide to hiking trails in Pennsylvania, with brief histories of important clubs and characters, see Barbara Wiemann, ed., *Pennsylvania Hiking Trails*, 12th ed. (Cogan Station, PA: Keystone Trails Association, 1988) and subsequent editions.
23. Henry N. Woolman, “The Horseshoe Trail,” *The General Magazine and Historical Chronicle* 39 (January 1937): 174–75.
24. *Ibid.*, 176.
25. “Minutes of the Meeting of Those Interested in a Hiking Trail,” 6 March 1934, HSTC papers.
26. *The Horse-Shoe Trail*, 1st ed., American Guide Series (Philadelphia: William Penn Association, 1938), 8.
27. Although some portions of the Appalachian Trail originally allowed horses, by 1941 the Appalachian Trail Conference was actively discouraging horseback riding on the majority of the trail. See, Appalachian Trail Conference, *Suggestions for Appalachian Trail Users* (Washington, D.C.: Appalachian Trail Conference, 1941), 1, 15.
28. Woolman, “The Horseshoe Trail,” 176.
29. *The Horse-Shoe Trail*, American Guide Series, 7.
30. The Horse-Shoe Trail Task Force and Trails Conservation Assistance Program, *The Horse-Shoe Trail Protection Plan: Report to the Horse-Shoe Trail Club* (April 1990), 2.
31. *The Horse-Shoe Trail*, American Guide Series, 8.
32. *Ibid.*, 177.
33. “Minutes of the First Annual Meeting of the Members,” 12 May 1936, HSTC papers.
34. “In the Court of Common Pleas in and for the County of Montgomery; April Term, 1935; No.13; Articles of Incorporation, Horse Shoe Trail Club, Inc.,” n.d., HSTC papers.
35. “Minutes of Directors’ Meeting,” 24 July 1935, HSTC papers.
36. Bronner, *Popularizing Pennsylvania*, 57.
37. Henry W. Shoemaker, *Black Forest Souvenirs* (N.p.: N.p., 1914), xv–xvi.
38. *Ibid.*, xii.
39. Bronner, *Popularizing Pennsylvania*, 26.
40. Henry W. Shoemaker and Joseph S. Illick, eds., *In Penn’s Woods: A Handy and Helpful Pocket Manual of the Natural Wonders and Recreational Facilities of the State Forests of Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Department of Forests and Waters, April 1925), 77.
41. Walker, *The Pennsylvania Mountaineer*, 14.
42. Wiemann, *Pennsylvania Hiking Trails*, 62.
43. Woolman, “The Horseshoe Trail,” 178.
44. “Meeting Minutes,” 12 May 1936, HSTC papers.
45. “Minutes of Annual Meeting of the Members,” 30 April 1937, HSTC papers.

46. "Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Members," 28 April 1938, HSTC papers. That government interference was not Woolman's main objection is clear from his repeated calls for state oversight: "Mr. Woolman again reminded the meeting of his ultimate aim to have the Horse Shoe Trail Club taken over as a State Trailway and urged everyone to keep that end in mind." "Minutes of Informal Meeting," 3 May 1941, HSTC papers.
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48. Waterman, *Forest and Crag*, 288–91.
49. Myron Avery, "The Appalachian Trail in Pennsylvania's South Mountain," *American Motorist* (April 1931).
50. W. L. Byers to Myron Avery, 15 February 1935, papers of the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, private collection. Hereafter cited as PATC papers.
51. Myron Avery to Oscar Book, n.d., PATC papers.
52. Myron Avery to R. E. Chamberlin, 28 April 1936, PATC papers.
53. Myron Avery to Henry Woolman, 16 October 1935, PATC papers.
54. "Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Members," 28 April 1938, HSTC papers.
55. "Minutes of the Annual Meeting," 1942, HSTC papers.
56. "Resolution adopted at a Joint Meeting, 5 November 1945, by the Garden Club Federation of Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania Forestry Association, and the Friends of the Land, Pennsylvania Chapter," HSTC papers.
57. "Treasurer's Report," 31 March 1937, HSTC papers.
58. "Minutes of the Directors' Meeting," 31 March 1937, HSTC papers.
59. "Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Members," 28 April 1938, HSTC papers.
60. "Minutes of Directors' Meeting," 15 May 1940, HSTC papers.
61. "Minutes of the Directors' Meeting," 30 April 1945, HSTC papers.
62. "Minutes of the Directors' Meeting," 2 April 1946, HSTC papers.
63. "Minutes of the Directors' Meeting," 31 January 1947, HSTC papers.
64. "Minutes of the Directors' Meeting," 20 January 1948, HSTC papers.
65. "Minutes of the Annual Meeting," 1948, HSTC papers.
66. "Minutes of the Directors' Meeting," 4 April 1949, HSTC papers.
67. For a detailed description of the Schuylkill River Desilting Project, see *The Schuylkill River Desilting Project: Final Report of the Schuylkill River Project Engineers* (N.p.: N.p., July 1951).
68. "In the Court of Common Pleas of the County of Berks, In the Matter of the Application for Incorporation of the Blue Mountain Wilderness Park Association," February 1937, BMECC papers.
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71. Jimmy Carter, "Appalachian Trail Bill Statement on Signing H.R. 8803 Into Law," (22 March 1978).
72. Charles Foster, *The Appalachian National Scenic Trail: A Time to Be Bold* (Harpers Ferry, WV: Appalachian Trail Conference, 1987), 16–17, 61–62.
73. Arthur Perkins to Myron Avery, 5 June 1929, PATC papers.
74. For one example, see Chester County Planning Commission, *Linking Landscapes: A Plan for the Protected Open Space Network in Chester County, PA* (West Chester, PA: Chester County, 1996).