

# Maryland New Deal Newsletter

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By Brent McKee & Colleen Walter



WPA poster art



WPA poster art

## Notable Quote:

*"This work phase in which I spent two years of my life happened over 40 years ago but the benefits I derived have stayed with me all of this time... We had blacks in our camps--this was before integration was accepted in our country. I got to know these boys in work and play and realized that discrimination had no place in our world... There was an intensive safety program in the CCCs... This safety training has never left me... In this outdoor life we learned to do a hard day's labor. We also developed a love for nature and a caring that is not to be abused by selfish interests."*

--Manuel Gomez, CCC Alumni, in the book "Roosevelt's Tree Army: A History of the Civilian Conservation Corps," by Perry H. Merrill, 1981.

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IN THIS ISSUE:

Maryland’s Tribute to the CCC at Gambrill State Park, by Colleen Walter .....2

1930s Elsewhere: Sitting, Striking, and Fighting in Michigan, by Bill Barry .....5

Maryland’s Forgotten Infrastructure Hero, by Brent McKee .....10

Our New Deal Benefit Today: The U.S. Naval Academy .....13

New Deal Art: “Provide for the Common Defense” .....14

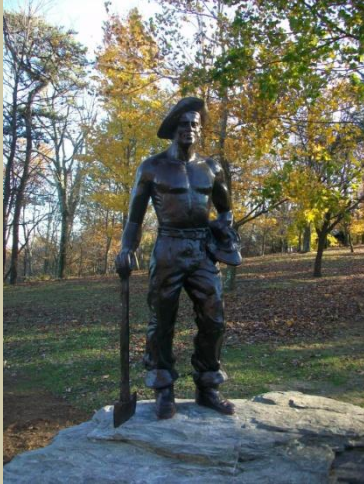
Neat Links .....14

Bios.....15

Can you help? .....15

# “Maryland’s Tribute to the CCC at Gambrill State Park”

By Colleen Walter



*Top Left: CCC statue at Gambrill State Park. Top Right: Tea Room at Gambrill State Park. Above: A view of Maryland, courtesy of Gambrill State Park. Photos by Colleen Walter.*

On November 5, 2011, at Gambrill State Park in Frederick County, Maryland dedicated the 58<sup>th</sup> life-sized bronze statue commemorating the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the United States. Former Governor Harry Hughes, Maryland Department of Natural Resources Secretary John Griffin, and Superintendent of the Maryland Park Service Nita Settina each said a few words. Retired DNR employees and historians Offutt Johnson and Francis

(Champ) Zumbrun both appeared in their respective historic uniforms to represent the history of the Maryland Forestry and Parks. The guests of honor were CCC alumni who worked in the park or at nearby camps, and were now members of Chapter 113 of the CCC Legacy. It was their efforts that ensured the statue's installation. On that crisp and clear day, the statue was dedicated on High Knob, near the site of one of the CCC's many lasting contributions to the park- a solid stone overlook that commands a masterful view of the valleys below. With the colors of fall in full glory, it was a fitting tribute to those men who toiled upon that very mountainside.

Gambrill State Park benefitted greatly from the efforts of the CCC. Just down from the statue is the Tea Room, still in use as a meeting space and rental facility for the public. From the precipice of Gambrill State Park, the Tea Room offers a magnificent view of the surrounding area. The Corps also blazed miles of hiking trails (totaling sixteen today), built restrooms, picnic shelters, and the campgrounds. Back on High Knob, the Nature Center features exhibit space dedicated to the work of the CCC at the park and in the surrounding region. Many rare photos and artifacts are on display, including a yearbook from 1936 featuring all the companies of the area, historic badges and uniforms, and other interesting assorted oddities. The building is open by appointment.

The modern quest to install a CCC statue in each state began in Grayling, Michigan in 1995. But the *first* statue dedicated to the CCC was the product of another New Deal program, the Works Progress Administration. Sculptor Uno John Palokangas created the statue at Camp 1917 Company SP-21 in California and was unveiled by President Franklin D. Roosevelt himself on October 1, 1935. It has since disappeared. The modern statues have the same appearance at every location, and are referred to as the *CCC's Worker Statue*. These statues remind park visitors (or inform them for the first time) of the contributions of this nation's Greatest Generation.

The dedication of the *CCC's Worker Statue* at Gambrill State Park is the first in Maryland. Complementing the statue are several interpretive plaques- one about the CCC at Gambrill, one about the CCC in Maryland, and the last about the CCC throughout the United States. Though perhaps long overdue, all this recognition comes at a time when our nation most needs a reminder of the CCC's enduring, valuable work. Today, we are seeing much this work begin to fall by

the wayside for lack of maintenance and funding. The commemoration and recognition of these good works can teach or remind park visitors about how these sites & structures came to be, and also compel visitors to think about the possibility of a new CCC.

**Sources:**

(1) Personal notes & recollections of the author.

(2) CCC Legacy, at [http://ccclegacy.org/CCC\\_Statue\\_List.html](http://ccclegacy.org/CCC_Statue_List.html),  
[http://ccclegacy.org/Statue\\_History.html](http://ccclegacy.org/Statue_History.html),  
[http://ccclegacy.org/Statue\\_Dedications.php](http://ccclegacy.org/Statue_Dedications.php), &  
[http://ccclegacy.org/statue\\_program.html](http://ccclegacy.org/statue_program.html), accessed March 2013.

(3) Maryland Department of Natural Resources, at  
<http://dnr.maryland.gov/publiclands/western/gambrill.asp>,  
<http://dnr.maryland.gov/mdconservationhistory/CCCStatueDedication.asp>,  
[http://dnr.maryland.gov/mdconservationhistory/CCC\\_Exhibits\\_GambrillSP.asp](http://dnr.maryland.gov/mdconservationhistory/CCC_Exhibits_GambrillSP.asp),  
accessed March 2013.



## 1930s Elsewhere: Sitting, Striking, and Fighting in Michigan

By Bill Barry



"Strikers guarding window entrance to Fisher body plant number three, Flint, Michigan." Photo and caption courtesy of the Library of Congress.

### *"The Flint Sit-Down Strike*

*December 30, 1936 – 6:45 a.m.*

*Men waving arms – they have fired some more union men. Stop the lines. Men shouting. Loud talking. The strike is on. Well here we are, Mr. Diary. Two sit-down strikers. This strike has been coming for years. Speed-up system, Seniority, overbearing foremen. You can go just so far you know, even with working men. So let's you and I stick it out with the rest of the boys, we are right and when you're right you can't lose. What a lot of talk. Confusion. Curses. Now the fellows are settling down. I never knew we had so many entertainers in this little shop. Some are dancing, others have formed a quartet, - fair singers too. Now a snake dance, everyone is asked to sing a song, do a dance, or recite a poem. So the day is passed. It's 4 A.M. Time to go to bed. What a night. NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO SLEEP."*

--Francis O'Rourke *Diary of A Sit-Downer*

Francis O'Rourke, like thousands of other General Motors workers, was present at the creation—not just of the sit-down strike but of the foundation of the modern union movement, with the social changes that involved, and the beginning of a shift in federal power that endured until the 21st century.

On December 30, 1936, at the middle of the second shift at Fisher Body # 1 in Flint, MI, GM began to move out some of the dies which stamped body parts for many models, at a crucial week in the new model year. Concerned that GM was repeating one of its basic union tactics--moving machinery to a plant where the union was weaker—the workers seized the plant and “sat down,” beginning an epic moment in the history of the 1930s. Forty-four days later, on February 11, 1937, the workers marched triumphantly out of Fisher Body # 1 with the first union contract between GM and the United Auto Workers.

This was, after all, General Motors—or “Generous Motors,” as the workers called it--the richest industrial corporation in the world, with plants in more than fifty cities across the United States, whose largest stockholders were the Du Ponts and whose president, Alfred P. Sloan, was the most famous executive in the country. The strikers, on the other hand, averaged about a tenth grade education, came from poor families, and consisted of many Southerners and Eastern European immigrants. Of course, once the strike started, GM proclaimed the sit-down an offense to the American tradition of property rights and assigned the blame for the Flint strike to “outside agitators,” “radicals,” and “reds.” The union called for supporters to gather at Cadillac Square in Detroit as a show of strength. The crowd of 150,000 supporters surprised even the union sympathizers and gave the union the self-confidence they needed to show its power and solidarity over its management “oppressors.” Other union workers joined in sympathy strikes, closing GM plants in Atlanta, Kansas City, Memphis and Cleveland. In all, approximately 135,000 men from plants in 35 cities in 14 states were striking General Motors.

Inside the plants, the workers created a culture of their own: each area of the plant had an elected “mayor,” while workers, who slept on the upholstery in the plant, were delegated to keep the place clean and orderly. Classes were held and gymnastic groups were started to relieve the boredom and sense of separation that workers felt. Food was delivered from outside the plant and family visits were arranged.



*"Strikers eating in cafeteria in Fisher body plant factory number three, Flint Michigan." Photo and caption courtesy of the Library of Congress.*

On Jan. 2, GM went to court to request an injunction ordering the strikers out but the union found that Judge Edward Black of Genesee County, who had issued a sweeping injunction, owned \$150,000 of GM stock and his order was revoked.

On January 11, 1937, GM tried to cut off food deliveries to the strikers and urged city police to retake the plant. The strikers held firm and a change in wind direction blew tear gas back at the police, who scattered in a moment immortalized as "The Battle of Bulls Run." A crucial support for the strikers was the creation of the Women's Emergency Brigade, wearing red berets, who picketed with the children of the strikers to block the police.





*"Wives and sweethearts of the striking auto workers. Members of the 'Ladies Auxiliary.' Flint, Michigan." Photo and caption courtesy of the Library of Congress. The sign on the wall reads, "We women must see to it that we win this fight!"*

On February 1, as political pressure was building and GM was trying to get an injunction, the strikers boldly seized Chevy # 4, spreading the sit-down and creating the leverage to force GM to negotiate the contract, which was a one-page document giving the UAW union recognition for 17 GM plants.

The strike attracted international attention and had nationwide repercussions:

- The most important political official was Michigan governor Frank Murphy, the son of an IRA man whose goal—later satisfied—was to move to the Supreme Court. When GM demanded that Michigan National Guard troops clear out the strikers, Murphy refused on February 4, stating: "I'm not going down in history as Bloody Murphy. If I send soldiers in on the [strikers] there'd be no telling how many would be killed."
- It created strong disagreements in Washington and fractured the top leadership of the administration. President Roosevelt was willing to allow the strike to continue because "the only crime of the strikers

was trespass" while Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins actively and personally supported negotiations between GM and the strikers. Vice President John Nance Garner thought the strikers had violated "property rights" and should be shot. Garner, denounced by union officer John L. Lewis as "a labor-baiting, poker-playing, whiskey-drinking, evil old man," effectively broke with FDR over the strike and moved into opposition to the New Deal as a whole.

- While historians can debate the true cause of the-switch-in-time-that-saved-nine, the impact of the Flint sit-down strike is clear: the constitutionality of The National Labor Relations Act of 1935 (often called "The Wagner Act," after its sponsor, Sen. Robert Wagner of New York) was argued in a case involving the Jones and Laughlin steel company at the Supreme Court on February 10-11, 1937, just as the strike was ending. The court, by its new 5-4 majority, ruled on April 12 that the law was constitutional and the federal government did have the authority to regulate labor relations, directing the tumult of the sit-down strikes into orderly legal channels.
- In another historic moment, on March 1, U.S. Steel, comparable to GM in its historical—and often violent—opposition to unionism, recognized The Steel Workers Organizing Committee, after a series of private negotiating sessions between US Steel President Myron Taylor and John L. Lewis, of the CIO, and the steel industry was organized.
- The sit-down strike, as a union tactic, spread to many different industries, until ruled unconstitutional.

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*If the Flint sit-down strike was one of the most important movements in US history, there is a historical record that is its equal: the simply marvelous "Remembering The Flint Sit-Down Strike, 1936-1937," <http://www.historicalvoices.org/flint/>, a project that combines text, extensive oral history interviews with more than 200 of the strikers, photographs, maps, and interactive graphics. Henry Kraus' *The Many and the Few* (1947) is a thrilling narrative of the strike, written by the editor of the union's newspaper, *The United**

*Auto Worker. Sidney Fine's Sit-Down: The General Motors Strike of 1936-1937 (1969) is a thorough history. Sit-Down for Victory, produced by the BBC, and With Babies and Banners: Story of the Women's Emergency Brigade (1979) are great videos.*

--Bill Barry

## **"Maryland's Forgotten Infrastructure Hero"**

By Brent McKee



*Francis H. Dryden: Head of the Maryland WPA and key administrator in the National WPA. Photo courtesy of the National Archives.*

*"If the depression that began in 1929 can be compared with a dark cloud, then the work done under the WPA is its silver lining. For the major projects undertaken in Maryland and other states have been of a kind to be of lasting value to the communities involved."*

—Francis Dryden, 1939

On March 19, 2013, the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) released their new Infrastructure Report Card for America. We received a D+. Our infrastructure—a great deal of it from the New Deal era (and lasting far beyond its expected lifespan)—is aging and deteriorating. So, I thought it would be a great time to highlight a man who helped modernize the water, power, and transportation systems of both Maryland and the nation; a man who most people have never even heard of.

Francis Dryden was born in Pocomoke City, Maryland, in 1891. He graduated from high school in 1906, and received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Maryland in 1909 (yes, they often did things much faster in those days!). Dryden had an amazing career, serving in both world wars, and in various engineering capacities for the city of Salisbury and the state of Maryland. In 1935 Dryden became the top administrator for the WPA in Maryland. In 1940 he rose to the national level and was made “Assistant Commissioner of the WPA in charge of all construction projects.” He even served briefly as Acting Commissioner of the WPA in 1942 (i.e., in charge of the entire national program).

Dryden was a member of the ASCE, so I think it is interesting to look at some of the WPA infrastructure development he supervised (or, at least, was a part of) from 1935-1943, in light of the new ASCE Infrastructure Report Card.

<b>Infrastructure Item (new or improved)</b>	<b>Total for Maryland, 1935-1943</b>	<b>Total for United States, 1935-1943</b>
Roads	1,348 miles	651,087 miles
Bridges & Viaducts	237	124,011
Culverts	5,160	1,178,933
Schools	408	39,397
Other Public Buildings	2,168	85,713
Parks	64	8,003
Playgrounds & Athletic Fields	165	18,149
Swimming & Wading Pools	9	2,073
Utility Plants	39	4,049

Water Mains & Distribution Lines	124 miles	16,121 miles
Storm & Sanitary Sewers	185 miles	24,271 miles
Airport Landing Fields	7	953
Airport Runways	5.4 miles	1,122 miles
Airport Buildings	25	4,183

(Source: Federal Works Agency, "Final Report on the WPA Program, 1935-43," Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1946")

It is truly amazing that someone who served in both world wars, and oversaw so much state and national infrastructure development, is now a forgotten Marylander.

Francis H. Dryden died on February 1<sup>st</sup>, 1968, in Salisbury, Maryland. He was 77. He helped build America, he helped protect America.

**Sources:**

- (1) "Work Done By WPA In State Reported," *Baltimore Sun*, March 26, 1939.
- (2) "2013 Report Card for America's Infrastructure," by the American Society of Civil Engineers, at <http://www.infrastructurereportcard.org/>, accessed March 2013.
- (3) Biographical sketch of Francis H. Dryden, from the National Archives, Record Group 69, Records of the Work Projects Administration.
- (4) "Francis Dryden Dies At 77; Was A National WPA Official," *Baltimore Sun*, February 3, 1968.



## Our New Deal Benefit Today! The U.S. Naval Academy



*U.S. Naval Academy. Photo by Brent McKee*

Funds from the Public Works Administration and labor from the Works Progress Administration facilitated many improvements at the U.S. Naval Academy. These New Deal improvements—and improvements at many other military installations—helped America’s defenses at a critical time in history; and they’re still helping us today. Interested in knowing more about the New Deal’s influence on the Naval Academy? Visit <http://livingnewdeal.berkeley.edu/map/>.

## New Deal Art: “Provide for the Common Defense”



*Bas relief by Lenore Thomas, on the Community Center building, in Greenbelt, Maryland. Photo by Brent McKee.*

This bas relief is one of several that adorn the Greenbelt Community Center (we featured the relief “Provide for the General Welfare” in our last issue). All were sculpted by Lenore Thomas, who is described in a 1983 Maryland Historical Trust Inventory Form as a “New Deal WPA artist.” The preparers of the form—Tracy Dillard and Richard Striner of the Art Deco Society of Washington—wrote, “The panels on the Center School (as it was then called) reflect the idealism of the New Deal in that at the time there was great interest in the common man.”

### Neat Links

**CCC Legacy**, <http://www.ccclegacy.org/>. The CCC Legacy seeks to “to promote awareness of the CCC program and the men who served so communities can recognize the value of the enduring strength of America’s youth during the Great Depression and visualize the tremendous resulting social and cultural benefits.”

**National New Deal Preservation Association**, <http://www.newdeallegacy.org/>. NNDPA is “a group of individuals, agencies, facilities and programs that organized in December 1998 to promote the identification, documentation,

preservation and education of people about the New Deal visual and performing arts, literature, crafts, structures and environmental projects.”

## Bios

**Brent McKee** is a board member of the National New Deal Preservation Association, a volunteer for the Living New Deal mapping project, and creator of “WPA Today,” a web project designed to help preserve the history of the Works Progress Administration, particularly in Maryland ([www.wpatoday.org](http://www.wpatoday.org)). He holds a Master of Public Policy degree from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. He can be reached at [wpatoday@gmail.com](mailto:wpatoday@gmail.com).

**Colleen Walter** is active in the history field through a variety of organizations. Her interest in the New Deal and the work of the CCC in particular came from her work with the MD Department of Natural Resources Committee for Maryland Conservation History. She continues to serve them as an active member and secretary of the Foundation, which recently earned non-profit 501C-3 status. Her master’s thesis for the University of Maryland, Baltimore County focused on the three pronged impact of the Corps upon the nation- at environmental, economic, and social levels for both the enrollees and local populations. She can be reached at [colleenewalter@gmail.com](mailto:colleenewalter@gmail.com).

## Can You Help?

Through our newsletter (and other activities) we’re trying to raise awareness and interest in Maryland’s New Deal history. We are also hoping to start a non-profit organization to preserve, present, and promote this history (possibly including the entire Mid-Atlantic area). If you can help in any way, e.g., information leads, article submissions, technical suggestions, we would appreciate it!