

Tamalpais Conservation Club and Civilian Conservation Corps on Mt. Tamalpais.



2nd Annual TCC meeting at Rock Springs, 1913. Courtesy Nancy Skinner Collection

Mount Tamalpais was a very popular destination for outdoor enthusiasts during the turn of the century. Before 1917 the entirety of Mount Tamalpais was owned by private landowners, who permitted the recreational use of the land under the condition that the trails remain clean and well kept. Due to increasing land degradation due to mistreatment, a concerned group of avid hikers saw the need for more responsible land stewardship and decided to create the Tamalpais Conservation Club (TCC). The purpose of the club was "...the conservation of things animate and inanimate in Marin County California, and

particularly the preservation of the scenic beauties and fauna of Mt. Tamalpais and its spurs and slopes, and its ultimate acquisition as a public park". The first meeting was held Feb. 27th, 1912 at a playground in Kentfield. The members grew from 135 to over 1000 by 1913.

The TCC repaired trails, built signs, cleared trash, built fire pits and campgrounds, and provided trail maps and trail etiquette education. They had their own club paper named "*California- Out-Of-Doors*". The TCC held annual meetings all over the mountain. Even on rainy days the meetings would still top 100 in attendance. The festive meetings usually included updates about restoration and stewardship efforts, and ended with entertainment in the form of lively singing, poetry, and musical performances.

Among the members was William Kent, a pivotal proponent for the movement to preserve Mount Tamalpais' natural and recreational resources. He donated land to create Muir woods National Monument in 1908, and in 1917 he worked with the TCC and the Marin County public to initiate a \$3 million bond measure to designate land for the Marin

Municipal Water District on the eastern slope of the mountain. In 1920, he donated Steep Ravine canyon as a public park (which was later adopted by Mount Tamalpais State Park).

When plans were underway to build a highway that would connect Mill Valley to Stinson Beach (what is now Panoramic Highway) the TCC knew that land subdivision and development would soon follow which would put an end to the public use of local trails and campsites. Concerned TCC members worked with the residents of Marin to raise funds to purchase portions of the southern and western face of the mountain to create a State Park. The dream was finally realized in 1930 when Mt. Tamalpais State Park officially opened to the public.

Though the original TCC members are long gone, their memory and efforts still live on, you may still recognize their names all over the mountain: JE Webb (Webb creek), Sydney Van Wyck Jr. (Van Wyck Meadow), W.T. Plevin (Plevin cut), H.S. Allen (Allen Tr.), R.F. 'Dad' O'Rourke (O'Rourke's bench), Alice Eastwood Tr., Verna Dunshee Tr.

Civilian Conservation Corps on Mt. Tamalpais



Mount Tamalpais company 1920V and 1921V

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was the most popular of the New Deal programs created by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to provide relief and a speedy recovery from the Great Depression. From 1933 to 1942, the CCC put some two million young men to work on a massive building program in America's parks and forests. Roads and trails, campsites and social halls, amphitheaters and visitor centers numbered among the many features constructed by the CCC. It offered the enrollees a renewed sense of dignity and hope for the future.

Mount Tamalpais State Park was among the list of fortunate parks that benefitted from the enduring craftsmanship of CCC crews.



CCC on log bridge project on Ben Johnson Trail

CCC crew S.P. 23 was composed of around 190 World War I veterans between the ages of 35 and 64 years old. Their camp was set where Alice Eastwood campground is presently. From April 1934 through April 1940, S.P. 23 built footbridges, camp stoves, campsites, and day-use sites. At Bootjack picnic area, you may still find stone BBQ pits and water fountains that are the result of CCC craftsmanship. They restored and built quite a few trails including Steep Ravine trail, TCC trail, Troop 80 trail, Bootjack, Ben Johnson, and the Dipsea trail.

They also placed over 1'110 cubic yards of overlapping heavy stones within the Redwood creek bed to prevent erosion and to provide secure habitat for local Coho Salmon.

The most prominent CCC projects in the park are the Mountain Theater and East Peak Fire Lookout. The CCC members

used 10-15 foot tripods and derrick riggings to artfully place about 5000 stones weighing between 600 to 4000 lbs. to create seating for the Sydney B. Cushing Memorial Amphitheater. The striking amphitheater holds several thousand visitors the annual Mountain Play in addition to various events throughout the year.



CCC working on the Mountain Theater, 1933

The CCC also built the current Gardiner fire lookout in 1936 to replace an older lookout from 1901. The new building used native stones which were hauled to the peak using a 1'000 foot long aerial tramway.

The work of the CCC crews provided the public with unprecedented access to Mount Tamalpais' natural and historic treasures that will endure for generations to come.

**Poems of Mount Tamalpais from the
Tamalpais Conservation Club's
California-Out-Of-Doors**

**“Call of the Trail “
John Parry, April 1920**

There's a charm in the lonely places,
And a lure in the trackless brush,
There are peace and rest for heart and soul.
In the depth of that wondrous hush.

There are sports that beckon so fondly,
Loved trails, golden paths of delight,
Where the breathing of woodland incense.
Adds its sweetness to fancy's flight...

Oh, how often I've thrilled with wonder,
At the grandeur of starlit night;
Or, in idleness, watched those day-dreams,
Flitting by in the warm sunlight.

In the silent places I've lingered,
With pleasure akin to fear,
And with grateful hear often murmured,
Oh, God, but it's good to be here.

“Our Mountain”

A.H. Hutchinson, August 1928

Above the lowlands, rising fair,
Old Tamalpais, thy slopes I see;
The trails that climb thy furrowed sides
All have endless charm for me.

In easy grades they mostly go
That weakest hikers may not fear,
With wild life ever close at hand,
Unspoiled by town or dwelling near.

Here columned trees beside them stand
Or odoriferous shrubs in close array;
Anon, o'er grassy slopes they pass,
Where bees about their business stray.

Squirrels, unaffrighted, beady-eyed,
Rouse to a chattering, saucy din;
Here banks of red, blue or gold
In flowery plenty hem us in.

Afar we gaze as up we climb, O'er lower
heights and hazy vale;
Sometimes we look out o'er the sea
To where shines white a distant sail

Offtimes a drifting bank of fog
Fills all a valley down below,
Through which small peaks like islands
rise-
Dark islands in a sea of snow.

And as the day grown old at last
The sun paints all the western sky,
And hangs cloud banners, rainbow-hued,
Above the dun earth lifter high.

Ah Tamalpais; thou art most fair!
Thy Beauties they are manifold.
I would that I might, worthily
Set forth thy charms in text of gold.

“A Peoples Mountain”

Andrew Wood, September 1939

Great mountain guardian of our western
shore,
Tamalpais! Rock ribbed and towering high,
With shoulders draped by fog sprited from
the sky
And at whose feet old ocean;s breakers
roar.
Stern and friendly says old Tamal lore,
Within these canyons where the west
winds sigh,
Safe were the furred things and birds that
fly,
And man found shelter in the days of yore.

When shall we make a refuge of thy breast,
For all things animate of wood and field,
Holding inviolate each crag and glen,
That thy broad slopes and fog enwreathed
crest
Perpetual harborage may to all life yield,
And make a playground for the sons of
men?

“Tamalpais”

Cristel Hastings, January 1923

"Mount Tamalpais, beauteous one,
Age old, yet blessed with youth!
Thy noble brow, caressed and kissed
By ocean winds that soothe!
Thy breast a haven found for clouds
That drift and linger there,
Till Western winds dispel their mist
And leave thee but more fair.

Thy winding trails, thy veins of life,
thy smile the sun above,
Thou livest with the wind thy breath
In dreams of life-and love
Inscrutable-majestic-proud
Thy valleys worship thee.
Off shore, at night, frail vessels mark
Thy lights far out at sea

Thy lure, thy charm are very new, mist
drenched or touched by frost,
When winds but dare their strength to
Match with thine battles lost.
When moonlight bathes thy brow serene,
When sunlight dries rain's tears,
Thee'll fairer seem, if that can be-
More beauty thine with years!"

“Mount Tamalpais”

John Parry, February 1916

Old Tamalpais! Not much in bulk or
altitude
Compared with those huge piles of sterile
pinnacles;
But unique in its fresh and verdant
daintiness,
Wrapped in its fleecy mourning robe of
soft white mist,
Or, outlined dark and clear against the
twilight sky,
It wins our deep affection by its constant
charm.
As if instinct with kindness and
sympathy,
It radiates a cheery hospitable glow,
Sharing its wealth of beauty with the lesser
hills,
And, with them, in their changing moods,
their light and shade,
Presents a study rich in color, pure in form,
A picture, finished, framed, in God's most
perfect art.