



# When the Veterans Came to Vermont: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Winooski River Flood Control Project

*Three events converged to bring the  
Civilian Conservation Corps to  
the Winooski Valley: the 1927 flood,  
the Great Depression, and the Bonus  
Army march of 1933.*

By THOMAS W. PATTON

Rain, beautiful rain.  
So say the poets,  
so say the farmers,  
so say the dam workers,  
when it means a day off.

—*The Eavesdropper*<sup>1</sup>

**T**he Little River of Vermont winds north from its junction with the Winooski River two miles west of the village of Waterbury, draining over 100 square miles including the western slope of Mount Worcester and a section of the eastern slope of the Green Mountains. After paralleling the stream for 2.5 miles, Little River Road turns sharply west and begins a steep ascent. Directly north, straddling and looming over the Little River valley, is the Waterbury Dam, 1,845 feet long and 187 feet high. The physical presence of the Waterbury Dam and two smaller earthen dams at East Barre and Wrightsville are

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startling. How they were built is important to the history of Vermont and the Civilian Conservation Corps.

During the first week of November 1927 a tropical storm collided with a frontal system from the west to produce the most damaging flood in Vermont's history. Rivers throughout the state overflowed, resulting in eighty-four deaths, fifty-five of them in the relatively compact area of the watershed of the Winooski River.<sup>2</sup>

Responding to the 1927 flood, Vermont followed "[t]he most popular solution for the flood control problem in New England [which] was to encourage the private utilities to build more storage reservoirs."<sup>3</sup> Working with the state's power companies, Vermont's Public Service Commission issued a preliminary report in 1928 that identified fourteen "storage Reservoir Sites" in the Winooski River Basin. In the final report of 1930, the Public Service Commission reduced its recommendations regarding the Winooski watershed to five, including lowering the height of the U.S. Clothespin Company dam in Montpelier and clearing the channel at Middlesex Gorge. The report also endorsed the Green Mountain Power Company's proposal to build a new dam on the Little River at Bolton Gorge to replace the dam destroyed by the 1927 flood.<sup>4</sup>

Legislation authorizing the Public Service Commission's recommendations died in committee after it was attacked by Governor Stanley C. Wilson, who criticized the proposals for "giving to public service corporations, under the guise of flood control, rights in our valleys, without adequate compensation both to the individuals concerned and to the state."<sup>5</sup> Future governor and U.S. senator, George D. Aiken, then a leader of the legislature, also opposed the legislation. Aiken later explained his position, writing, "Careful examination of the bill made it evident that, in effect, it would give the power companies control of the destiny of the State. For this reason it was defeated in the legislative committee, of which I was a member."<sup>6</sup>

In 1931 The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers submitted a flood control plan for the Winooski River to Congress. The plan recommended storage reservoirs at East Montpelier (Winooski River), East Barre (Jail Branch), South Barre (Stevens Branch), Wrightsville (North Branch), Moretown (Mad River), Waterbury (Little River), and Huntington (Huntington River), as well as clearing the channel of obstructions in the Middlesex Gorge and in the city of Montpelier. With the cost estimated at \$10,000,000 "a lack of funds delayed its implementation."<sup>7</sup>

As a result of Vermont's flood control-power controversy and congressional parsimony, no flood control work was done in the Winooski watershed except by the State of Vermont, which raised bridges and repaired damage from the 1927 flood.



*Winooski River Basin, manuscript map, January 20, 1937.*

### THE VETERANS DIVISION OF THE CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS

When legislation authorizing the Civilian Conservation Corps passed Congress on March 31, 1933, the purpose was to put unemployed young men to work in the nation's forests. Initially, there was no provision for a veterans division. The need for such a program became apparent to the Roosevelt Administration when veterans started arriving in Washington in May 1933 to press for payment of their World War Bonus. The previous July, President Hoover had directed Chief of Staff of the Army General Douglas MacArthur to remove a much larger group of veterans from the capital, an action that was recorded by the newsreel cameras and resonated in the 1932 presidential election. Contrasting the Hoover Administration, Roosevelt and his advisor Louis Howe, who was delegated to deal with the veterans, decided they should be "conquered with kindness." On May 9 the White House announced that it would make Fort Hunt, Virginia, ten miles down the Potomac from the capital, available as a short-term location for a veterans' camp. Food, tents, medical care, and transportation to and from the Capitol so the veterans could lobby were included in the offer and, as an unannounced bonus, Eleanor Roosevelt visited the veteran camp.<sup>8</sup>

While the veterans were being relocated to Fort Hunt, Roosevelt and Howe decided that the best long-term solution was to convince the veterans to join a separate division of the Civilian Conservation Corps. Historian Roger Daniels credits the idea to General Frank Hines, director of the Veterans Administration (1923–45) adding that Robert E. Fechner, the director of Emergency Conservation Work (the CCC), who did not want the veterans in the Corps, was "particularly bitter" about the proposal.<sup>9</sup> On May 11, Roosevelt amended Executive Order No. 6101 of April 5, 1933, which implemented the Civilian Conservation Corps, outlining the procedures for the enrollment of "25,000 veterans of the World War" in "a separate part" of the CCC: "The executive order issued today prescribes that only veterans holding honorable discharges will be permitted to enter the reforestation camps, where they are to receive \$30 a month as well as food and shelter."<sup>10</sup>

The initial reaction of the veterans to the Administration's offer of a dollar a day for reforestation work while abandoning lobbying for the bonus, was distinctly negative. As would be revealed in Vermont, a high percentage of the veterans had trades, which before the Depression, had paid much more. When it became clear, however, that the Administration was going to close Fort Hunt, the veterans started to enlist in the reforestation army. A small group of "die hards" tried to dissuade them but "the splendid food supplied to the men during their stay here

and the other comforts provided have proved too strong an argument to men who formerly had been accepting charity.”<sup>11</sup>

To make it clear that Fort Hunt was not going to become a permanent veterans camp, when the veterans enlisted in the Corps they were sent to Fort Humphreys, Virginia (an engineering camp), Fort Meade, Maryland (between Washington and Baltimore), or Langley Field, Virginia (close to the future site of the Pentagon). On May 23, presidential assistant Stephen Early reported to Roosevelt that 1,200 veterans had been moved from Fort Hunt to the “Forest Conservation Conditioning Camp at Langley Field, Virginia,” and only 400 veterans who declined to join the CCC were given tickets home. “The bonus camp at Fort Hunt is being struck tonight and all is peaceful on the Potomac.”<sup>12</sup>

While the Administration originally planned to limit service in the CCC to six months, by the fall of 1933 it was clear that separation from the Corps almost always meant unemployment. This was confirmed in September 1933, when the Ford Motor Company announced plans to hire 5,000 world war veterans and its Dearborn, Michigan, hiring center was overwhelmed by former soldiers. Faced with the possibility that discharged and then unemployed CCC veterans would bivouac in Washington for a third time, rather than remaining in locations like Vermont, where they were welcome and doing productive work, the Administration extended the veterans’ time limit for service in the CCC. Late in 1933 the service limit was extended to nine months and in March 1934 when an “April exodus” was expected, the Administration extended service to a year.<sup>13</sup>

As the veterans’ nine-month limit of CCC service approached, “The Eavesdropper” presented the case for extending the length of veteran service in the CCC:

With only 25,000 veterans, from the original 4,000,000, allowed to enroll, less than one per cent [of World War veterans], and now this handful must go.

The veterans in many cases are partially incapacitated for usual employment, as a result of what the war did to them.

Right in this vicinity, there are about 6,000 veterans, winning back their self respect. A few dollars again in their pockets.

A smile again on their faces and a song in their hearts. Why not leave us alone?<sup>14</sup>

The nine-month service deadline for Company 1352, a 1933 bonus march company working on the Winooski project, was due to expire on March 26, 1934. A week before the scheduled discharge George A. Koryski, a company leader, told the *Barre Daily Times* that when the enlistments expired, he intended to lead 500 men from Winooski on a

“new bonus march,” and that “veterans from other states will rapidly appoint leaders and start their delegations towards the national capitol.” Koryski, who had served in the veterans police force at Camp Wilson in East Barre, had been “a sectional leader in the famous bonus march of 1932.” The Baltimore resident was not alone, as “the proposed new bonus invasion is one of the chief topics for conversation when veterans gather at the various company barracks.” “The Eaves-dropper” echoed Koryski’s threat to the Administration: “The watch word among those going out by June 30 is ‘Washington by July 4.’ The main topic of conversation is the second bonus march.”<sup>15</sup>

A few days later, following a communication from Congressman Wright Patman of Texas, the sponsor of legislation for immediate payment of the World War bonus, who advised against such a march, George Koryski changed his position and “announced that he would do everything possible to stop the proposed march.” Even without Koryski, the idea was still alive, as another veteran wrote to the *Barre Daily Times*, “Furthermore, the movement towards Washington is still planned for July 30 if we are forced out.” Patman’s “communication” indicates that Washington knew and was concerned about another veterans march on the Capitol. In the midst of the debate over another march on Washington, word reached Vermont that the enlistment of veterans in the CCC was extended to one year.<sup>16</sup>

Three months later on June 27, 1934, the following information was placed in the minutes of the CCC Advisory Council by Robert E. Fechner: “President Roosevelt authorized me to suspend the yearly limitation on veterans. There will be no limitation on war veterans.”<sup>17</sup>

#### CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS VETERANS COME TO VERMONT

While the Bonus Army was evolving into the Veterans Division of the Civilian Conservation Corps, Vermont officials were quick to realize that the veterans might be sent to Vermont to work on a Winooski River flood control project. State Forester Perry Merrill recalled: “In 1933 when there was trouble in Washington with the veterans of WWI marching on the Capitol to get their war bonus, Governor [Stanley C.] Wilson contacted President Franklin D. Roosevelt and informed him that Vermont had a place and plans ready where the Bonus could immediately be employed.” According to at least one source, Governor Wilson traveled to Washington several times to meet with the president and Robert Fechner to lobby for a Winooski project.<sup>18</sup>

On June 2, 1933, Fechner authorized a Winooski watershed project designed and directed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. As originally planned, it would entail the construction of large earthen dams at



*Poster for Camp Greene, CCC (veterans unit), Wrightsville, Vermont. From Sixth District Gazette, 2:1 (Saturday, 24 August 1935).*

East Barre, South Barre, and Wrightsville, the reconstruction of a fixed timber dam at Montpelier, and channel clearing and enlargement of a fifteen-mile section of the Winooski River between Middlesex and Montpelier. At Middlesex Gorge a rock ledge of 14,000 cubic yards would be removed from the river, while at Montpelier a bend would be straightened and the banks rip-rapped. These projects would employ 7,725 men under the Corps of Engineers: "Immediate control of the work of the veterans will be vested in the district engineer of the First New York District, [while] War Department personnel will have charge of the camps."<sup>19</sup> The project was "the first work by the Corps of Engineers towards controlling floods in New England."<sup>20</sup>

Vermont residents witnessed an unusual sight on the morning of July 2, 1933. Company 1351, the first unit of the Civilian Conservation Corps veterans division, an African-American company, arrived at the Barre railroad station from Langley Field, Virginia, to work on the Winooski River Flood Control Project. Most of the company's 128 veterans, who had come to Washington as part of the 1933 Bonus March, were from Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. As described by the CCC Yearbook, perhaps with some exaggeration, when the black veterans

left the train local Vermonters “stood around with wide eyes and open mouths, amazed at the unexpected sight before them. Most of the children had never seen a colored man before.” Later in the week, two white companies, 1105 and 1107, arrived from Fort Devens, Massachusetts. Organized at Devens on May 23, 1933, Company 1105 was New England’s first CCC company of veterans. Company 349, a second African-American unit, arrived on July 13, 1933. Company 349 was also a Bonus Army company, having been organized at Fort Meade, Maryland, on June 27, 1933.<sup>21</sup> Some of the members of Company 1351 were veterans of the 369th Infantry, one of the first American units to arrive in France and the only American unit awarded the French Croix de Guerre. On February 17, 1919, the 369th marched through Manhattan to Harlem, receiving a heroes’ welcome.<sup>22</sup>

#### THE EAST BARRE DAM AND CAMP WILSON

The first project the veterans undertook was the East Barre Dam, which is now 1,460 feet long, 400 feet wide at the base, 65 feet high, and has a 100-foot spillway. A four-by-seven-foot concrete conduit runs under the dam to carry the normal flow of the Jail Branch of the Winooski River. The dam impounds water during periods of flooding in a 2.5-mile, 675-acre basin. It is comprised of 308,000 cubic yards of earth, 84,000 cubic yards of rock fill, 200 cubic yards of concrete and 1,300 tons of steel.<sup>23</sup>

The first veterans to arrive at East Barre pitched tents for temporary shelter and worked on the camp site, preparing it for the ten companies, totaling 2,500 men, who would soon arrive. “Armed with axes, shovels, picks, grub-hoes and bars,” the veterans went to work removing trees, brush, rocks, and soil “until a layer of impervious material is reached on which the foundation for the dam can actually be started.” Four companies of about 200 men each, dug a 600-foot trench for the conduit. Hand labor predominated; the men used 600 wheelbarrows as well as picks, shovels, sledges, and drills.<sup>24</sup>

By the end of October the veterans were assembling the steel base for the dam’s outlet and had started pouring cement. As work progressed, in January 1934, Companies 1106, 1108, and 1111 were transferred to the Websterville quarries where they worked four-hour shifts through the exceptionally cold days of that winter, cutting, breaking, and loading granite for the spillway, interior, and face of the dam. The veterans rode in open trucks three miles uphill from East Barre to the quarry. Along the way the “kids in East Barre pelt the men riding on open trucks with snowballs.”<sup>25</sup>



That season's weather and the trip to the quarries were documented by "The Eavesdropper," an East Barre veteran who contributed regularly to the *Barre Daily Times*:

The winter of 1933-4 will linger long in retrospect when most of us are tottering old men. Thursday last will not merely loom up as the seventh consecutive day of the month when the mercury shrunk like a red worm. Forty degrees below conjure up no bitter memories. Twenty below is a daily occurrence. There are other things deeper than any temperature reading, which will quicken the pulse of memory.

How many of us can forget in a hurry that ride, vicious in its brevity to make even the angels weep, over hill and dale, right up into hyperborean vastness of the quarries.

Who can fail to remember the memorable winter of 1933-4!<sup>26</sup>

In the spring the Corps of Engineers leased 184 dump trucks, sixteen shovels and four dragline excavators to move the fill for the East Barre and Wrightsville dams. As the fill was placed on the dam it was rolled to make it compact and level. "The Eavesdropper" welcomed the machines that performed this work: "These two modern robots combined to save the men time and arduous labor—first the bulldozer goes about, spreading the dirt in an efficient manner, after which the huge roller flattens it to a pancake mass, hard and strong, performing this work in a few minutes, which would require hours of perspiration by manual labor."<sup>27</sup>

When the main structures of the dams were finished the faces were rip-rapped with stone to stabilize them. At East Barre the stone came from the granite waste piles at Websterville. At Wrightsville and Waterbury the veterans quarried the granite. The granite was lowered down the face of the dams and positioned by hand. The veterans became quite skilled at this task and the surface of the rip-rapping on the three dams is still very level and stable. The East Barre Dam was completed in November 1935.

The CCC camp at East Barre, named in honor Governor Stanley C. Wilson, was on leased land of the Nelson Farm, at the present intersection of Route 302 and Reservoir Road. By the end of August 1933 there were over 2,000 men at Camp Wilson, when it was inspected by Major General Fox Connor, commander of the Army's 1st. Corps, headquartered in Boston. General Connor "spent considerable time talking to men in the company recruited from the Washington bonus marchers," concluding "that they had no complaints to make, the men expressing their content with the treatment being accorded them at the camp. He was also assured that they were getting plenty of well-cooked food."<sup>28</sup>

At the end of August it was announced that the Winooski CCC contingent would spend the winter in Vermont and by the middle of

September the men started moving from their tents to heated wooden barracks, as twelve buildings were completed and twelve more were under construction. However, at the end of October, Company 2215 was still in tents. Each company had five barracks and shared a recreation and lavatory-shower building with another company. By December, \$185,752 had been paid to civilian laborers to build barracks and other buildings at Barre and the small camp at Montpelier.<sup>29</sup> Water, sewer, telephone, and electric lines were installed. The installation of the telephone and electric poles provided "The Eavesdropper" with a literary opportunity: "Tommy Mullins, noisy but popular member of our company, is hard at work these days, putting up telephone poles. Note: He is a flag pole sitter by occupation."<sup>30</sup>

Every CCC camp had a canteen or post exchange and the large veterans camps had a beer parlor. "The beer parlor area on Saturday night after pay day was a lively place."<sup>31</sup> The East Barre Camp also had a jail.

With over 2,000 veterans at Camp Wilson, "A little city is springing up in the vicinity of the camp grounds. . . . refreshment and supply stands. . . . A 3.2 beer canteen has been set up nearby and even a filling station sprung up near the roadside over night to take care of curious motorists who visit the camp." Ernest Bisson who had a farm across the road from the camp, had a stand. A "Palatial Hubla Night Club" was located on what "The Eavesdropper" called "Grappa Boulevard" (Plainfield Road). "Best Recreation—sitting in one of the joints on Grappa Boulevard, guzzling beer and swapping stories." In January 1935 the owner of the "Orange Hut" on the East Barre-Groton Road near the CCC camp was charged with violating federal liquor laws for having untaxed liquor on the premises.<sup>32</sup>

#### THE CLOTHESPIN DAM AND CAMP MCKEE

The second veterans' camp the CCC established in the Winooski watershed was named after the mayor of Montpelier, William L. McKee, and was located in a cornfield on the Barre Road in Berlin, overlooking Montpelier. Veterans' Companies 1109 and 1112, which arrived from Fort Devens, Massachusetts, on July 11 and 12, 1933, camped at McKee while they worked on what was called the "Clothespin Dam" in Montpelier. The dam was named after the U.S. Clothes Pin Company, which had a factory next to the dam. They also cleared the Winooski River channel and placed rip-rapping on its banks. The veterans lived in tents at McKee until December 15, when they were moved to Camp Cushing at Wrightsville.

By far the smallest dam the CCC veterans built in the Winooski



*“Robert Fechner Dedicates Clothespin Dam, [November 26, 1934]” Sixth District Gazette, 2:1 (Saturday, 24 August 1935). Left to right: Lt. Col. R. E. Lee; Vermont Governor Stanley C. Wilson; Robert Fechner, national director, Civilian Conservation Corps; Maj. E. E. Gesler, chief U.S. Army engineer, Winooski dams.*

watershed, the “Clothespin Dam” replaced a timber crib dam. It was topped by tainter gates that could be opened and shut. “Its purpose was to increase the channel capacity to Montpelier by diverting flood waters down-stream, and it doubled the amount of flow.”<sup>33</sup>

Robert Fechner spoke at the dedication of the dam on November 26, 1934, praising the morale of the men and their work output, which was “more than expected.” He also “stressed the fact that the Winooski valley flood control project is the largest single project in the country. No other individual CCC project equals it in size or importance. [The men] had justified the faith of the President in them.”<sup>34</sup> On the negative side, less than two months later the *Barre Daily Times* reported that an “Ice Jam on North Side of Clothespin Dam” had to be dislodged with dynamite, and later that year some Montpelier citizens and city officials were saying that “type of structure was not adapted to a northern climate.”<sup>35</sup> The dam is just north of Route 12 where it crosses the Winooski River.

### THE WRIGHTSVILLE DAM

In July 1933, the CCC veterans and the Corps of Engineers started work on the Wrightsville dam and reservoir, located on the North Branch of the Winooski River three miles north of Montpelier on Route 12. In contrast with the sites for the East Barre and Waterbury dams, acquired from the Green Mountain Power Company, which had purchased them during the 1920s, the Wrightsville site was acquired from individual owners. The State of Vermont obtained the property, some through condemnation, then deeded it to the federal government for the period of construction, after which it was returned to Vermont. By July 9, 1936, Vermont had expended \$375,000 "for the purchase of land rights and easements." Altogether the federal government would spend \$13,700,000 constructing the four Winooski dams.<sup>36</sup>

The main road from Montpelier to Worcester ran through the Wrightsville dam and reservoir site, necessitating the construction of a new road, which opened in 1934 on the western side of the reservoir. A settlement of houses, cemetery, and local roads were removed, and a stream that entered the North Branch at the dam site was diverted upstream.

The Wrightsville Dam is also earth filled and faced with stone rip-rap. It is now 1,525 feet long and 115 feet high, with a 645-foot concrete tunnel running underneath the dam. Recreational facilities and a hydro-electric generation station have been added since construction.<sup>37</sup>

As at East Barre, the first task of the veterans was to clear the reservoir area of trees and brush. Then, using 400 pound charges of dyna-



*Wrightsville dam under construction, no date.*

mite, the dam site was cleared to base rock. The detonations at noon and seven P.M. could be heard for many miles. By August over 1,000 men were clearing the reservoir and dam area and another thousand were relocating what is now Route 12 around the reservoir. The same shift to power equipment to move fill for the dam that occurred at East Barre also occurred at Wrightsville. Over 1,115,000 cubic yards of earth and rock fill, over 5,000 cubic yards of concrete, and 1,200 tons of steel were used in the dam.<sup>38</sup>

On May 7, 1935, the Engineers directed the detonation of five tons of dynamite in tunnels under Culver Hill to loosen the tightly packed clay and gravel “laid down by nature. The main tunnel extended 160 feet under the ridge, which was blasted with four ‘cross cuts’ at each side.” The blast loosened 30,000 cubic yards of “material which will be used for the completion of the crest of the huge earth dam.”<sup>39</sup>

The dam was completed in October 1935 and on August 1, 1936, President Roosevelt came to inspect. Leaving his train at Waterbury, FDR first viewed construction of the Waterbury River Dam, where the veterans maintained regular construction operations even though it was a Saturday. Then the president’s entourage of nearly fifty cars drove through Montpelier, where the fire whistle blew once signaling stores to close “so that merchants and clerks may have the opportunity to watch the procession,” and on to the Wrightsville Dam. The president’s car stopped on the road crossing the dam, where Major Paul M. Ellman, the Corps of Engineers’ officer in charge of the Winooski project, described how the dam had withstood a major test during flooding the previous March. Then the president outlined the history of the dam to the newspapermen, concluding with the “laughing remark, ‘It’s an excellent example of cooperation in boondoggling between the State and Federal government.’” Turning to his “‘hobby of reforestation,’” Roosevelt “questioned Vermont and New Hampshire officials as to progress in ‘upstream engineering,’ including the planting of trees on steep slopes to check erosion. State Forester Perry H. Merrill responded by outlining state forest conservation policies.” Apparently the president was not impressed, as the *New York Times*, reported that FDR “was disappointed to find neither state doing very much.”<sup>40</sup>

#### THE WATERBURY DAM

The third and largest earthen dam the veterans constructed was the Waterbury Dam on the Little River at Bolton Gorge. Over two million cubic yards of earth fill were required to construct the dam, which at completion was 1,845 feet long, 175 feet high (it is now 187 feet high),

and nearly 900 feet wide at its base. A six-mile storage reservoir totaling 1,330 acres contains the water.<sup>41</sup>

By the end of 1934, with the Montpelier, East Barre, and Wrightsville dams rapidly moving toward completion, Governor Wilson was lobbying the Administration for a dam at Waterbury. During the 1927 flood, water from the Little River, which enters the Winooski below the village, caused the Winooski to back up into the village, killing eleven residents. The Corps of Engineers 1931 flood-control plan had recommended a dam on the Little River.

Accompanied by Governor Wilson and Colonel R. E. Lee, commander of the sixth CCC district, Robert Fechner inspected the proposed dam site on November 26, 1934, and endorsed the project. Two weeks later Governor Wilson traveled to Washington, where he met with Fechner and representatives of the Corps of Engineers, and the following morning, December 13, 1934, met with President Roosevelt. According to the *Waterbury Record*, Wilson was scheduled for a five-minute appointment with the president but it lasted for thirty minutes, demonstrating "the President's interest in the local flood control project." The *Barre Daily Times* reported: "Governor Wilson was granted a very satisfactory interview with President Roosevelt who personally favors this flood control project, realizing that it is one of the outstanding achievements of the CCC corps in the whole country."<sup>42</sup> By the first of the year plans for the Waterbury Dam were on Roosevelt's desk along with Fechner's recommendation that it be approved, but a complication developed when it was realized that the Emergency Conservation Work (CCC) and the Public Works Administration had only been extended for two more years while the Waterbury project was estimated to take three years. "It is foreseen that the work if not completed on March 31, 1937 [it was finished in October 1938], will be so near it that funds will be forthcoming for its final stages." . . . "President Roosevelt, however, says 'Go ahead.'"<sup>43</sup>

In March 1935 Vermont's two Republican senators, Warren R. Austin and Ernest W. Gibson, changed their position and cast the deciding votes with the Administration opposing the McCarran amendment to the appropriation bill, which would have required that relief workers be paid at the prevailing wage rate. The *Waterbury Record* reported "Their willingness to go ahead with the Administration is reported as due largely to the adoption of an amendment allocating funds for flood relief in Vermont." Later in the month, both senators voted with Roosevelt on the passage of the entire \$4,880,000,000 relief appropriations bill, which included funding for the Waterbury Dam.<sup>44</sup>

A small settlement known as Robert's Mill, with the remnants of a mill, a well-cared-for school, several large farmhouses, barns, and a church, were removed for the Waterbury dam and reservoir. While most of the property, approximately 10,000 acres, was bought by the State of Vermont from Green Mountain Power, which had acquired it in the 1920s in anticipation of building a power plant, approximately forty smaller landowners also sold their property to the state.<sup>45</sup>

Clearing the dam site began in April 1935 by Company 1110, which had transferred from Camp Meade at Middlesex Gorge. By the end of the year thirteen companies were clearing area for the reservoir and dam as well as establishing the borrow pits for material for the dam. The following January four junior companies joined the veterans. This was the first time they were used on the Winooski dams and apparently they worked successfully. While they were clearing the reservoir area, the veterans started excavation for the base of the dam to solid rock and an outlet tunnel to carry the normal flow of the Little River. The 900-foot-long concrete steel-reinforced semicircular conduit is ten and a half feet in diameter. Since the tunnel had to be completed before construction of the dam could start, work proceeded through the winter of 1935–6 by heating the tunnel to seventy degrees so concrete could be poured. Two 48-inch needle valves were installed in the completed tunnel to regulate the flow of water to a maximum of 1,500 cubic feet per second.<sup>46</sup>

In February 1936, with the work on the conduit "well advanced," gravel and rock were being placed for the "heel and toe of the dam." The following month a heavy rain and snow melt caused the Little River to go on a rampage and overflow its banks. While the dam site escaped serious damage, fear of an even worse flood heightened the need to complete the project as soon as possible, and by midsummer of 1936 three shifts of 1,900 CCC veterans and 200 civilians combined to work on the river for eighteen hours each day.<sup>47</sup> Water was diverted from the gorge through which the Little River flowed and it was "stripped, cleaned and dried." By summer, the gorge was "plugged" with concrete and the dam was rising."A total of 170 trucks, most of four yards capacity, operated by private contractors and veterans, hauled the 2,000,000 cubic yards of earth to the dam from borrow pits up the valley. In one pit south of Moscow, Vermont, labeled "Siberia," earth was excavated by fourteen large power shovels. "A steam shovel gets more attention than a lady in a beauty parlor," wrote Eavesdropper.<sup>48</sup>

To maintain a smooth and safe flow of trucks into the pits and on the rising dam (truck accidents were a frequent cause of injury and death in the CCC), a carefully drawn and maintained traffic pattern was estab-

lished. As described by the *Waterbury Record* “Truck speed is strictly regulated. Distance between trucks is definitely governed at three lengths and gear to be used in ascending the grades is specified. At the approaches to the dam, spotters are stationed to direct the trucks to their dumping locations.”<sup>49</sup>

With three shifts working, a record 26,500 cubic yards of “selected material” was added to the dam on July 7 and nearly a million cubic yards were placed that month. As fill was placed on the dam it was compressed by cement rollers. Progress was so rapid that the third shift was discontinued at the end of September 1937.<sup>50</sup>

When the structure of the dam had been completed, in the cold of early January 1937, Companies 1107, 1110, and 1181 began the work of placing stone rip-rap on both faces of the dam. The *Waterbury Record* reported that the men “are becoming quite expert with continued practice, and are turning out an excellent grade of work.”<sup>51</sup>

The construction of the Waterbury Dam was spectacular enough to become a tourist attraction. The dam was illuminated at night and an observation terrace was built at the western end with a twelve-foot signboard describing the project. “Many visitors and tourists from all parts of the country visit the project day and night and evince considerable interest.”<sup>52</sup> Signs built by the veterans were also placed at the East Barre and Wrightsville dam sites.

The Waterbury Dam was dedicated and delivered to Vermont on October 19, 1938, with Robert Fechner delivering a message from the president. Green Mountain Power built a hydroelectric plant at the base of the dam in 1953.<sup>53</sup>

### CAMP SMITH

While most CCC camps housed approximately 200 men, Camp Charles M. Smith at the Waterbury dam site served 2,000. Named in honor of Vermont’s governor when construction started, the camp was located on both sides of Little River Road, about a quarter of a mile southwest of the dam. Camp Smith “operated as a self-sufficient village, with its own waste and sewerage system, police and fire departments, medical dispensary, three stores, a library that contained over 6,000 books, and a 462-seat theater.” The “village” had about 100 buildings, sixteen U- or L-shaped barracks that were brought from East Barre and Wrightsville and combined, eight T-shaped mess halls, a “theater, library, skating rink, chapel, ‘Swiss Chalet,’ officers’ quarters,” a large infirmary, a school, and camp garden.<sup>54</sup> Except for a collection of stone chimneys (the surviving artifact at many CCC camp locations), a stone step with “Company 1110” carved in, cement-filled rollers for



leveling and compacting the dam, and remnants of a wooden dam on the stream running by the camp, little remains. The open plateau the camp occupied is now forested.

The echo of a macabre episode reached Vermont in October 1935, when “40 survivors of the Florida hurricane arrived last week at Camp Smith in Waterbury.” About 300 veterans working on highway construction in the Florida Keys at a Federal Emergency Relief Administration camp had been killed on September 2, when a hurricane struck and they were not evacuated. Ernest Hemingway wrote an account of the tragedy for the Communist magazine *New Masses*, describing the veterans as “husky, hard-working and simply out of luck, but many of them close to the border of pathological cases.”<sup>55</sup>

Camp Smith had its own disaster a short time later. At 3:00 A.M. on December 26, 1935, a fire that “spread with unusual rapidity—these buildings being made entirely of wood—” trapped and killed four Army officers. Fortunately more than half the officers assigned to the L-shaped building were on leave, preventing even more loss of life. An article in the *Waterbury Record* the previous fall had described the hydrant system at Smith as capable of delivering “2,500 gallons per hour” and reported that “the engineers point with pride to the fact that no serious fire has ever occurred in the camps they have erected.”<sup>56</sup>

But the standard CCC wooden barracks with tar paper roofs, coal stoves, and inadequate fire exits, were fire hazards. On November 27, 1934, fire had destroyed the barracks building at the Camel’s Hump



*Inside CCC barracks, Camp Greene, Wrightsville, Vt., 1934.*

side camp of the Waterbury village forestry camp, with “The boys who had been quartered there losing all their clothing and personal effects in the blaze,” and the same day as the Camp Smith fire, a barracks was destroyed by fire at the Jericho, Vermont, camp, again with “the loss of the possessions of the men quartered there.” Sixth District Chaplain Lewis W. Sanford conducted the funeral service for the officers in the Camp Smith chapel and an Army board of inquiry comprised of local officers was quickly assembled and “found no evidence of incendiarism.”<sup>57</sup>

A different kind of problem arose at Smith in 1937. Company 1108, a white junior company went astray after the company commander encouraged a group of “night riders” to force other junior whites through intimidation that included beatings to follow company rules. After Robert Fechner was made aware of the company’s aberrant behavior, the company commander and company leaders were relieved, and six company members were transferred.<sup>58</sup>

#### THE CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS VETERANS IN VERMONT

The Winooski project was described as “the greatest reunion of veterans yet held” with all the services represented: “Men from veterans’ homes and hospitals, men who have been on the bum, some since the war; college men, National Guard officers, all trades and all professions; all colors and many different nationalities, all the drift and wreckage of the depression.” But there was “one great difference from other conventions and that is that everybody is broke. One man raking the street the other day found a quarter and was nearly mobbed.”<sup>59</sup>

Due to the size of the project and the high turnover of men, which the *Waterbury Record* estimated at an annual rate of 40 percent, a large number of veterans worked on the Winooski project. At the dedication of the Clothespin Dam in November 1934, Lt. Colonel R. E. Lee, the commanding officer, estimated that over 15,000 veterans had already worked on the project and the largest dam had yet to be started. Captain J. Willington Glover, who commanded Company 1105 for almost four years, characterized the veterans as being from thirty-six to sixty-eight years old, from illiterate to having a college degree, and with backgrounds in everything from unskilled laborers to ministers. They displayed “a marked similarity in type, to the average man of any small community: married, has an education that extends through one year of high school, is familiar with a trade or job, mature, and with the same view points and minor vices of a corresponding individual on the outside.”<sup>60</sup>

An article in the *Barre Daily Times* on July 25, 1933, documented the wide impact of the depression by listing the former occupations of

the men of just one company, 2215, which was organized in New York and probably numbered about 240 men:

There are over 32 trades, 17 professions, 20 skilled workers, 10 laborers, nine specialists and four seamen. . . . artists, bakers, blacksmiths, boilermakers, bricklayers, bookbinders, carpenters, clerks, accountants, chauffeurs, well driller, elevator operator, embalmer, firemen, furrier, landscape gardeners, iron workers, skilled laborers, laborers, laundrymen, lumberjacks, miners, machinists, marble setter, metal caster, cement masons, mechanics, nurse (male), painters, pipe-fitters, plasters, sheet metal worker, printer, punch press operator, riggers, steam fitters, steel workers, teamsters, truck drivers, welders, engineers (explosive, stationary and marine), draftsmen, surveyors, farmer, policemen, film inspector, salesmen, sign painter, telegrapher, teachers, waiter, musicians, seamen, medical attendants, railroad dispatcher, shipping clerks, and ship worker.<sup>61</sup>

African Americans served in the CCC in approximate proportion to their percentage of the population, but almost always in segregated companies and camps. As black units were difficult to place, they were frequently clustered in locations that accepted them. If an area resisted having black units, they were generally removed, as happened in central New York in July 1933, the same month African-American veterans arrived in Vermont.

The East Barre and Waterbury camps each had two African-American companies: at Barre, Companies 1351 and 349, and at Waterbury, companies 1105 and 1111. At Waterbury the black units were “segregated from the rest of the camp, in a U-shaped barracks with its own mess hall, both located on the west side of the road in the southern end of the camp, between two garages.”<sup>62</sup>

Although the black veterans were welcomed to Vermont, some stereotyping and segregation occurred within the Corps. At the end of the first month a veteran wrote in one of the nation’s most important black newspapers, the *Afro-American*: “We find Vermont to be a beautiful state. Most of the residents are old settlers of New England. Hardly knowing what Jim Crows is, and caring less, we have eight companies of white vets here and two colored companies.” In a previous issue, the *Afro-American* described how Thomas A. Lemon, principal of Potomac High School in Hague, Virginia, had enlisted in the CCC (probably in Company 1351) as a personnel clerk and traveled to Barre in July 1933. He reported that “there was no discrimination as to type of work done.” But he described an episode at the Barre worksite and the reaction it brought forth. A Southern officer said: “When you want to find a n\_\_\_\_\_ he isn’t there.” The remark was overheard and immediately the

black veterans went on strike. The commanding officer quickly transferred the offending officer.<sup>63</sup>

Baseball helped circulate the African-American CCC-vets around the region and drew large crowds "All [towns] have baseball teams and we are in demand as much as if we were the K.C. Monarchs or Baltimore Black Sox. We play some small town every Saturday and Sunday. There is a lot of competition between athletic clubs, but we are weathering the storm, losing only one game out of five. Just beat the little town of Washington, Vermont, Sunday, by a 12 to 2 score and they wanted to book a return game but at present we have games until August 13."<sup>64</sup>

On several occasions, Chaplain Lewis W. Sanford directed what was then a widely presented (at least in white communities), stereotypical view of African Americans, a minstrel show with the black-faced characters "Checkers," "Onions," "Amos," "Cider" and "Bones." A minstrel show was performed for Robert Fechner at Camp Smith when he came for the formal start of the Waterbury Dam project. *The Sixth District Yearbook* presented the Hollywood stereotype of Blacks in the 1930s: "Humor, spontaneous and unaffected, is always the dominant trait of the Negro." However, "The Eavesdropper" had some poetic words about African Americans working on the East Barre Dam: "The huskie, duskie sons of Dixie are each prepared to do his share of work on the new flood control dam under construction here."<sup>65</sup>

While the extent of alcohol abuse by veterans at Winooski cannot be measured, it appears that alcohol was a problem for a considerable number. The court report in the *Montpelier Evening Argus* lists the arrest of numerous veterans for public intoxication. A description of Camp Wilson just before the first payday noted how the camp was "considerably quieter than is the case with the CCC camps for boys." But, the article went on, "Pay day may be different. We are looking forward to a big time pay day."

That prediction that "Pay day may be different." proved true and alcohol was blamed for two-day free-for-alls in Montpelier and East Barre after the veterans were paid on July 31, 1933. In East Barre, Sheriff Henry C. Lawson and two deputies were attacked by veterans after they were called to investigate an assault. The unarmed officers only managed to escape after struggling to get back to their car. In Montpelier, additional CCC police were sworn in to control the veterans after a local police officer suffered "a severe blow to the forehead."<sup>66</sup>

In Montpelier City Court, veterans usually paid fines of \$5 or \$7 plus court costs of \$7-\$9 for public intoxication. One veteran was sentenced to twenty days in jail after he told Judge A. C. Theriault that he could pay his fine but would rather serve jail time. After the first CCC payday

the Barre City council followed the police chief's recommendation and required the beer halls to close at midnight and not have closed curtains that limited visibility from the street.<sup>67</sup>

The second payday was quieter. The *Barre Daily Times* reported "C.C.C. Men For Most Part Well Behaved" and "Only a few of the veterans imbibed too freely of liquor during the evening and they were taken back to camp as quickly as possible." However, as the Waterbury project was starting in the summer of 1935, "The number of men on a spree was larger than usual and at one time last evening a load of seven men rather badly under the influence of intoxicants was rounded up. All of the men were returned to camp for punishment by the authorities there."<sup>68</sup>

The veteran column in the *Barre Daily Times* had differing comments about alcohol. Chaplain Sanford reminded the camp that three men had been sent home for drinking excessively, "forfeiting all pay and allowances. Think it over gang, think it over." Arthur O'Hara, "the Eavesdropper," who had served in France, sometimes made fun of drinking: "I never drink intoxicating liquor regularly. Some days I drink more than others. Some days I don't drink at all." But some of O'Hara's comments were more serious: "We let down once a month—on pay day—and how we let down. (Sometimes we fell down.)"<sup>69</sup>

Judging from the newspapers, very few CCC veterans were arrested on any charge other than public intoxication. The exceptions included a veteran who was sentenced to six months hard labor for assaulting an eighty-year-old man and another who got fourteen months for entering and wandering around a house.<sup>70</sup>

It appears that the CCC had a high accident rate. At least two veterans died in truck accidents, in separate accidents two others died after falling off a Montpelier railroad bridge, a veteran was killed by a train in Montpelier, another drowned in the Winooski River, and four officers were killed in the fire at the Waterbury camp. In December 1933 the *Montpelier Evening Argus* reported, "There have been five deaths to date, or at an annual rate of 3.75 per 1,000 which compares most favorably with a small city or town which annually has a death rate of 12 to 14 per thousand."<sup>71</sup>

A favorable relationship quickly developed between the CCC veterans and Vermont residents, in spite of some abusive drinking and an occasional theft by the veterans, including a local resident's prize chicken.<sup>72</sup> The first month the veterans were at East Barre, Chaplain Lewis W. Sanford, a Barre native, started several programs that promoted interaction between the camps and the Vermont community. A few weeks after the CCC's arrival, Captain (Reserve) Sanford started

writing a near-daily column for the *Barre Daily Times* “With the Men of the C.C.C.-V.C.” Regular contributions from Arthur O’Hara’s “Eaves-dropper,” describing the life of the veterans at work and off duty, provided an excellent chronicle of the East Barre camp. An early item about the menu at the East Barre camp may have caused resentment among some Vermonters struggling through the Depression: “Sunday noon, for the first time, the boys ate a chicken dinner on the new mess tables. The dinner with all the trimmings, was topped off with pineapple ice cream.” But Sanford sought to make amends and quickly invited the public to the camp, “to our open air entertainments on Sunday evenings when we have a get-together sing and entertainment program, and also on other nights of the week when we shall have entertainments as often as possible.”<sup>73</sup>

By the end of the first month, a covered stage with a piano had been constructed at Camp Wilson and every Sunday night veterans and community residents performed. Miss Lila Culver, of Barre, “the Kate Smith of Vermont,” was a regular visitor the veterans appreciated. She appeared regularly on Waterbury radio station WDEV: “Miss Culver, whose mellow voice soothes radio listeners, drew the heaviest applause. She goes big with the veterans.”<sup>74</sup> The Barre City band visited the camps and the Drum and Bugle Corps of American Legion Post No. 3 entertained at Wrightsville. “When ‘Tammany’ was played the crowd roared. Many of the CCC members took this as a salute to the boys from the ‘sidewalks of New York,’ who constitute the majority of the Wrightsville area.”<sup>75</sup>

Chaplain Sanford also arranged for the veterans to visit local churches and veterans’ posts. A state officer of the American Legion came to East Barre to counsel the men on their status with the Veterans Administration, and in 1935 the veterans of Camp Wilson were invited by the Barre American Legion post to participate in their Memorial Day parade and ceremony. Chaplain Sanford was “asked to read the General Orders and a poem to the memory of the Unknown Soldier.”<sup>76</sup> At Wilson, Sanford directed the Sunday night talent show, a Christmas pageant at the Barre Opera House attended by 300 veterans, and the touring minstrel show, which was revived several times.

On Washington’s birthday in 1934, a winter sports carnival was held at the Wrightsville Camp, drawing over 10,000 people. Buses brought outside junior CCC units and local residents from Montpelier, while cars were provided for Army officers. Events included a ski competition, a tug of war, a sledge hammer competition, a toboggan slide, and a spaghetti dinner for CCCs and guests: “All were given dinner from dining halls.”<sup>77</sup>



*Christmas dinner, Company 1112, CCC Camp Greene, Wrightsville, Vt., 1933.*

With Vermont struggling under the impact of the Depression, the realization that the presence of the CCC provided a major economic stimulus to the Winooski Valley undoubtedly tempered any negative feelings Vermont residents might have had toward the CCC veterans. According to the Census Bureau of the Department of Commerce the number of business establishments in Barre had declined from 97 in 1929 to 63 in 1933, and the number of wage earners from 1,827 to 803; total wages had fallen from \$3,449,650 to \$1,097,752, and the value of products produced from \$10,423,266 to \$3,684,583.<sup>78</sup> In February 1934, the *Barre Daily Times* estimated that civilian workers at the Barre-Montpelier-area CCC camps, which included the forestry camps, had been paid a total of \$285,000 since early September, which “has done much to tide over many families,” and that “A considerable amount of the supplies needed by the camps have been purchased locally and thousands of dollars put into circulation in this territory.” The paper also estimated that each CCC company resulted in \$3–\$5,000 a month spending in the local community and that “more than \$3,000,000 will be expended over the next few years on the Waterbury project.”<sup>79</sup>

The men of several companies complained about the temperature just after they arrived in Vermont in July, 1933. Veterans of Company 1352, comprised primarily of men from the Baltimore area who participated in the 1933 Bonus March, were issued a total of four blankets

when they arrived. Company 1105, which had been organized at Fort Devens, Massachusetts; also complained about the temperature: "The last few nights have been so cold in the city of tents that we have lost all sympathy for Admiral Byrd in his visits to the polar region. In spite of the four heavy blankets, the men spread everything they have on the beds, except for their hob-nail shoes, to try to keep warm."<sup>80</sup>

In mid-August the weather was excellent, but ominously cold by mid-October when most of the men were still in tents where some units would remain into December. On October 25, twelve inches of snow fell in the area collapsing the tents, there was a severe blizzard on February 21, 1934, and the winter of 1933–4 turned out to be "One of the worst winters suffered in this section of the country in many years." The temperature was reported to be 41 degrees below zero in December and on February 8, 1934, the *Barre Daily Times* reported that "Below Zero Is Making Record," as "This is the 33rd day since the middle of October, the 16th day of the year, and the sixth consecutive day this month on which the official temperature in Barre was zero or below. [It is] the coldest winter in the memory of some older inhabitants."<sup>81</sup>

Mud was also a problem. At the end of August, 1933 a rainy spell occurred and the resulting mud reminded the vets of the war in Europe. The newly laid out camps were muddy and as they removed the trees, dirt, and rocks from the dam sites, the work areas turned to mud: "The weather the past day or two certainly did make the gang sort of homesick for those 'quiet' days back in 1917. Rain-mud-rain and more mud then rain, more mud, then rain some more just like those good old days. Why you could almost feel the cooties and smell the cognac. Look Mr. and Mrs. Vermonter, you must serve us better weather than this or we will feel that you don't want us in your midst." And the mud did not go away. "We had a fine warm day for Thanksgiving. The mud, however, reminded one of Flanders fields."<sup>82</sup>

Each of the Winooski camps had an educational program with an educational advisor and assistants. Camp Smith's had a separate school building with an annex and offered a wide range of courses, including: music, journalism (veterans produced the *Goldbricker* and its successor *Sixth District Gazette*, and broadcast a weekly CCC radio show over the Waterbury station WDEV), arts and crafts (leather craft, plastics, weaving with two looms), woodworking, auto mechanics, clerical skills, sign painting, typing (there were twenty typewriters), elementary and advanced English, mechanical drawing (which was "very popular with veteran members"), photography, civil service, forestry, first aid, preparation for civil service exams, motion picture projection, and agricultural classes. John Weibe, an assistant to the education advisor at Camp



Meade in Middlesex, then at Camp Smith Waterbury, was testimony to the educational background of the CCC instructors, and the wide sweep of unemployment during the 1930s. Weibe had an M.A. degree from Stanford University and was a certified public accountant.<sup>83</sup>

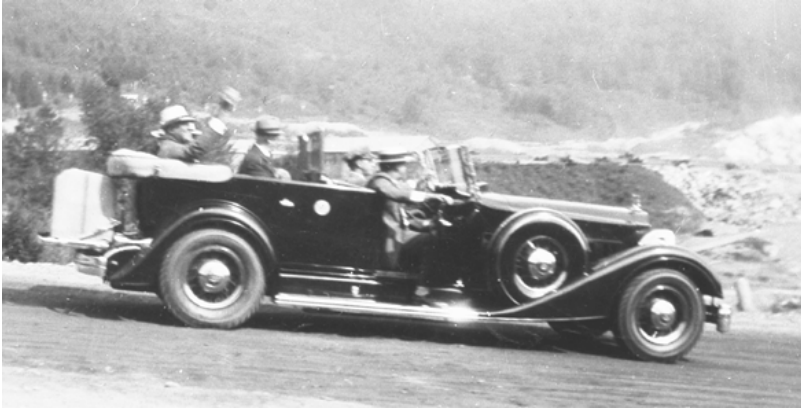
As part of the educational program an “experimental farm” complete with hogs, cattle, sheep, ducks, pigeons, and other animals was started at the Wrightsville Camp and moved with the veterans to Camp Smith. The hogs at Wrightsville caused a minor political scuffle that reached Washington when local farmers complained to newly elected U.S. Representative Charles A. Plumley that the 100 CCC pigs were unfairly competing with the pigs they raised. Plumley discussed the matter with James McEntee, assistant director of the CCC, and demanded an investigation, which failed to materialize. In an editorial the *Waterbury Record* praised feeding pigs the camps’ garbage as being economically and ecologically sound, and presumably the pigs stayed.<sup>84</sup>

### CONCLUSION

After their experience of the war and falling into unemployment, it appears that working on the Winooski Project was a positive experience for most CCC veterans. They enjoyed meeting the people of Vermont, the camaraderie of a facsimile military camp with regular food and pay, and Vermont’s environment. Just after they came to East Barre the veterans found a swimming hole, which “refreshed our memories of our boyhood days,” as well as a place in “the creek up back of the camp” where “there were so many trout that it was almost impossible to wade the brook without stepping on one.”<sup>85</sup> “The Eavesdropper’s” swan song, however, indicates one aspect of life in Vermont that the veterans found difficult: “I’m goin’ where the weather suits my clothes. I’m goin’ where the North Wind never blows.”<sup>86</sup>

Nonetheless, when the six-, nine-, and twelve-month time limits of veteran enrollment in the CCC were due to expire, the Winooski veterans threatened to organize a third march on Washington. This threat, combined with the success of the Winooski project, made it clear to the Administration that it was better to have the veterans working in Vermont than unemployed and marching in Washington.

Vermonters, President Roosevelt, and CCC Director Robert Fechner, had cause to recognize the successes of the Winooski project: the work the veterans performed, little crime considering 15,000 veterans participating in the first eighteen months alone, that African-American veterans felt welcome, excellent veteran-community relations, and no repeat of the first payday near-riots in both Barre and Montpelier.



*President Franklin D. Roosevelt at Camp Charles M. Smith, CCC, Waterbury, Vt., on his tour of inspection of Vermont's flood control project, July 25, 1936.*

Today, the three large earthen dams in central Vermont stand as monuments to the work of the veterans division of the Civilian Conservation Corps, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the State of Vermont. President Roosevelt's comment while watching the CCC veterans working on the Waterbury Dam applies to each of the three dams today: "It's a great sight, a great sight."<sup>87</sup>

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> "The Eavesdropper" was Arthur J. O'Hara, a CCC veteran who came to East Barre in January, 1934 and stayed. "The Eavesdropper" (the names was credited to the 15th-century Parisian poet François Villon) appeared regularly in the *Barre Daily Times* and O'Hara went on to edit "The Sixth District Yearbook," "The Goldbricker," and its successor "The Sixth District Gazette." *Barre Daily Times* (hereafter *BDT*), 26 August, 1933, 8. A sample of "The Eavesdropper's" humor: "It would have been cheaper for the government, instead of building a dam, to teach everybody in Barre how to swim." *Ibid.*, 7 July 1934, 8.

<sup>2</sup> In 1931 the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers determined that compared to the 1927 flood the 1869 Winooski flood was only 65 percent as severe, and the 1930 flood only 80 percent as severe. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, "Winooski River," Report to 71st Cong., 3d Sess., *House Document* 785, 27 February 1931, 22.

<sup>3</sup> William E. Leuchtenburg, *Flood Control Politics: The Connecticut Valley Problem, 1927-30* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1953), 32.

<sup>4</sup> Harold Kilbrith Barrows, *Advisory Committee of Engineers of Flood Control-Vermont* (Montpelier: Vermont Public Service Commission, 15 December 1928), 50. H. K. Barrows, *Flood Control, Power and Storage Projects for the Rivers of Vermont* (Montpelier: Vermont Public Service Commission, 15 December 1930), 228-231.

<sup>5</sup> Leuchtenburg, *Flood Control Politics*, 34.

<sup>6</sup> George D. Aiken, *Speaking From Vermont* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1938), 168.

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, "Winooski River," p. 138. Suzanne G. Cherau and Kristen Heiter, *Intensive Archeological Survey Dam Reconstruction Work Areas Waterbury Dam and Reservoir* (Concord, Mass.: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New England District, 2002), 31.

<sup>8</sup> The first action of the Roosevelt Administration relating to veterans was to propose the

Economy Act, which cut veterans' benefits so substantially that even after Roosevelt reduced the cuts, the average benefit had decreased by 18 percent and some were eliminated entirely. White House Statement on Amelioration of Cuts in Veterans' Allowances, 6 June 1933, in Samuel I. Rosenman, ed., *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt* (New York: Random House, 1938), II, 219. President Roosevelt opposed Representative Wright Patman's bill that would have paid the World War bonus due in 1945, which he would veto in 1935 and 1936, believing it represented special interest legislation. He told the American Legion Convention in 1933, "no person, because he wore a uniform, must thereafter be placed in a special class of beneficiaries over and above all other citizens," and that veterans as a group were not in need of special help. Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Address before the American Legion Convention, Chicago, 2 October 1933," in Rosenman *Public Papers of FDR*, 375–377. For Howe quote see *Washington Post* (hereafter *WP*), 15 May, 1933, 1.

<sup>9</sup> Roger Daniels, *The Bonus March: An Episode of the Great Depression* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1971), 220, 232.

The Civilian Conservation Corps had two major divisions, the veterans division and the "junior" division, comprised of unemployed young men. Following President Roosevelt's directive, this much larger division concentrated on improving the nation's forests. They built fire towers, truck roads, firebreaks, planted more trees than had been planted before and possibly since, fought forest fires, worked on forest insect and disease control, salvaged timber, built parks and campgrounds, and improved fish and wildlife habitats. For a view of what the junior units accomplished in Vermont see Perry H. Merrill, *Roosevelt's Forest Army: A History of the Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933–1942* (Montpelier: privately published, 1981).

Waterbury was home to one of Vermont's first forestry camps. Vermont Forestry Commissioner Perry Merrill wrote to presidential aide Louis Howe five days after FDR implemented the CCC: "Urgent that you authorize enrollment for state camp Waterbury, Vt., immediately. . . . I have men enrolled, camp site picked. Awaiting instructions." Perry H. Merrill to Louis Howe, 13 April 1933, Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library (hereafter *FDRL*), Hyde Park, New York, Official File 268, CCC, Box 1. The federal camp was established on June 19, 1933, in a field north of the village of Waterbury at the intersection of Vermont Routes 100 and 2. The men worked on state parks at Mount Philo and Hubbard Park, and from side camps at Camel's Hump and Mount Mansfield they worked on forest stand improvement. On July 10, 1933, Eleanor Roosevelt visited the Waterbury Camp. Characteristically she was "Much interested in the kitchen of the camp, she inspected all the equipment and looked over the menus. She talked with the boys, all of whom were recruited in Vermont, and listened to their comments on camp life." Several buildings and a swimming pool the CCC built at Waterbury are still used. *BDT*, 10 July 1933, p. 1, *Waterbury Record* (hereafter *WR*), 21 June 1933, 1, 12 July 1933, 1.

<sup>10</sup> *New York Times* (hereafter *NYT*), 12 May 1933, 1. Veterans of the Spanish American War and smaller conflicts would also be enrolled.

<sup>11</sup> *NYT*, 22 May 1933, 3.

<sup>12</sup> "Memorandum," Stephen Early to FDR, 23 May 1933, *FDRL*, Official File 268, CCC, Box 1, May 16–31 folder.

<sup>13</sup> *BDT*, 20 September, 1933, 6, *Montpelier Evening Argus* (hereafter *MEA*), 20 March 1934, 4, *BDT*, 21 March 1934, 8, 28 March 1934, 1. Consistently, about 20 percent of the veterans left Vermont when their enrollment was up.

<sup>14</sup> *BDT*, 21 March 1934, 8.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 19 March 1934, 1, 21 March 1934, 8.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 23 March, 1934, 1, 21 March, 1934, 8.

<sup>17</sup> "Minutes, CCC Advisory Council, 27 June 1934," *FDRL*, OF-268, 2.

<sup>18</sup> Merrill, *Roosevelt's Forest Army*, 25. Throughout the history of the CCC, Vermont Forest Commissioner and State Forester Perry H. Merrill aggressively and successfully lobbied for the placement of forestry camps in Vermont. He had graduated from the College of Forestry at Syracuse University in 1917 with a B.S. in forest resource management and studied at the Yale Forest School. He started working with the Vermont Forest Service in 1916, was a World War I veteran, and was named state forester in 1935. He also served as mayor of Montpelier during the Winooski Flood Control Project. *BDT*, 8 June 1935, 1.

For Governor Wilson see *Intensive Archeological Survey*, 32. No record of any meeting between FDR and Governor Wilson in the spring of 1933 was found in the "Day-By-Day Record" of President Roosevelt in the *FDRL*, Vermont newspapers, *New York Times*, or, *Washington Post*.

<sup>19</sup> *WR*, 3 June 1933, 1, 7 June 1933, 1.

<sup>20</sup> H.J. Woodbury, "Flood Control in New England," *Military Engineer*, XXXII, No. 186 (Nov.–Dec. 1940), 397.

<sup>21</sup> Arthur O'Hara, literary editor, "Yearbook, Sixth District, First Corps Area, Civilian Conservation Corps" (hereafter "Yearbook"), 1937, 7.

<sup>22</sup> David Levering Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue* (New York: Penguin 1997), 4.

<sup>23</sup> U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New England Division, *Water Resources Development: Vermont* (Concord, Mass., 1995), 31.

<sup>24</sup> The Winooski Project was organized as the Sixth CCC District, U.S. Army First Corps Area (New England), with headquarters in Montpelier, while the junior forestry companies in Vermont were organized as the Second District. Headquarters was located on State Street, off what is now Gov. Davis Ave., in Montpelier, until November 1935, when it was moved to Camp Smith at Waterbury. At Montpelier some dignitaries were treated to lunch next door at the Pavilion Hotel, while others had lunch at the camps. With the exterior remarkably unchanged, the headquarters building is now occupied by the Thrush Tavern. Quote from *BDT*, 7 July 1933, 1.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 9 October 1934, 2.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, "The Eavesdropper," 10 February 1934, 2.

<sup>27</sup> 20 June 1934, 2.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 18 August 1933, 1.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 31 August 1933, 1, 14 September 1933, 8, 28 October 1933, 8, 2 December 1933, 1.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 10 July 1933, 8.

<sup>31</sup> Timothy Cleary (Reserve Army Officer), quoted in Merrill, *Roosevelt's Forest Army*, 24.

<sup>32</sup> *BDT*, 7 July 1933, 1, 16 August 1933, 8, 19 September 1934, 2, 14 September 1934, 2, *MEA*, 16 January 1935, 3. By a three to one vote, East Barre voted to permit the sale of alcohol. *BDT*, 19 May 1934, 2.

<sup>33</sup> Joanna M. Doherty and Jeffrey D. Emidy, *Historic and Photographic Documentation Waterbury Dam* (Concord, Mass.: U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, New England District, 2001), p. 17.

<sup>34</sup> *BDT*, 26 November 1934, 1, *MEA*, 26 November 1934, 2. Robert Fechner took a personal interest in the Winooski project. Reference was found to the CCC director visiting seven times. He lived in Quincy, Massachusetts, and the *Barre Daily Times* reported that he had visited after the region after the 1927 flood (*BDT*, 14 December 1934, 1). When he visited, Fechner made a point of eating with the veterans and watching their entertainment. Fechner's frequent visits, the visit of President Roosevelt, and the praise both men had for the project indicate that the Administration considered the veteran work at Winooski to be a success. Fechner could be critical of Corps projects, as he was of the CCC-Corps of Engineers, Wallkill, New York project, which neither he nor the president ever visited.

<sup>35</sup> *BDT*, 22 January 1935, 8. *Ibid.*, 29 August 1935, 1. In 1975 the Corps of Engineers removed the gates from the dam and lowered it.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 7 September, 1933, 1, Corps of Engineers, *Water Resources Development-Vermont*, 38.

<sup>37</sup> Corps of Engineers, *Water Resources Development-Vermont*, 37-38.

<sup>38</sup> *WR*, 17 July 1935, 1, *MEA*, 9 August 1933, p 8, Merrill, *Roosevelt's Forest Army*, 26.

<sup>39</sup> *BDT*, 8 May 1935, 1.

<sup>40</sup> *MEA*, 31 July 1936, 5, *Burlington Free Press* (hereafter *BFP*), 3 August 1936, 1, *NYT*, 2 August, 1936, 1.

<sup>41</sup> Doherty and Emidy, *Historic Documentation*, 19, Corps of Engineers, *Water Resources*, 36.

<sup>42</sup> *WR*, 19 December 1934, 2, *BDT*, 14 December 1934, p. 1. The "Day-By-Day Record" of President Roosevelt at the Roosevelt Library at Hyde Park, New York confirms that FDR met with Governor Wilson on December 13, 1934, from 10:50 to 11:15 A.M. FDRL, "Day-By-Day Record," 13 December, 1934. Roosevelt and Fechner did not always act favorably regarding flood control projects. In lobbying for the CCC-Corps of Engineers Wallkill River Flood Control Program in southern New York, Senator Royal S. Copeland, the program's primary congressional advocate, frequently referred to "recent and destructive floods" (*NYT*, 5 February 1937, 14). After a local resident sent an anonymous letter to Fechner, which he forwarded to the President, refuting the Senator's claim of recent flood damage, Roosevelt ended funding for the project and the CCC veterans, some of whom had worked at Winooski, were pulled out, leaving an incomplete project. ("A Taxpayer" to Fechner, FDRL, 5 February 1937, OF 132, "Flood Control," Box 4.)

<sup>43</sup> *WR*, 23 January 1935, 1 and *BDT*, 24 January 1935, 3.

<sup>44</sup> *WR*, 6 March 1935, 1, and 27 March 1935, 1.

<sup>45</sup> *BFP*, 1 May 1935, 1, Doherty and Emidy, *Historic Documentation*, 18-9. On August 18, 1935, an overflow crowd attended the last service held at the Little River Baptist Church. The church had been formed in 1840 and the building completed in 1845 (*BDT*, 19 August 1935, 1).

<sup>46</sup> *WR*, 12 February 1936, 1. Merrill, *Roosevelt's Forest Army*, 26.

<sup>47</sup> Arthur O'Hara, Editor, *Sixth District Gazette* (hereafter *Gazette*), 22 February 1936, 1. The Connecticut Valley was not as fortunate, 24 lives were lost and 77,000 were left homeless. At the Wrightsville Dam several roads were flooded, a barn and house were washed away, while the reservoir was described as being half full with forty feet of water (*MEA*, 18 March 1936, 1) Elsie Beard, who lives in Orange, said that the water has never gone over the spillway of the East Barre Dam but came closest in 1936 when waves were splashing on to the spillway. (Elsie Beard, interview, 29 January

2004). Local residents concluded, “Montpelier and Barre benefited definitely from the construction of the East Barre and Wrightsville Dams” (*MEA*, 31 March 1936, 4). *MEA*, 1 June 1935, p. 1, 25 July 1936, p. 6 and *Gazette*, 21 March 1936, p. 1.

<sup>48</sup> *MEA*, 1 June 1935, 1, and 25 July 1936, 6, *Gazette*, 21 March 1936, 4, *WR*, 7, July 1937, 1, and 14 July 1937, 1, *BDT*, 15 June 1935, 2. Today’s regular “dump” trucks carry 7 cubic yards and the larger 10-wheel trucks carry 14 yards.

<sup>49</sup> *WR*, 14 July 1937, 1.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 4 August 1937, 1.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 13 January 1937, 1.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 7, July 1937, 1.

<sup>53</sup> Following a 1944 Corps of Engineers’ report that concluded, “based on these data now indicate that by the combination of certain conditions, nature could, produce a flood of such magnitude in the Winooski watershed that the dams could be over-topped and destroyed” (U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, “Examinations of Rivers and Harbors,” *House Documents*, Vol. 3, 78th Cong., 2nd. Sess., 1944, 4), the three earthen dams were raised and their discharge capacity increased. Work was undertaken in 1985 to control seepage through the Wrightsville Dam and is now being undertaken again. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, *Water Resources*, 37.

<sup>54</sup> Doherty and Emidy, *Historic Documentation*, 22, communication with Brian Lindner, a local historian who grew up on Little River Road.

<sup>55</sup> *BDT*, 12 October 1935, 2, Aubrey Williams (FERA) to FDR, “Memorandum,” NACP, RG 69, FERA, “New Gen. Subject Series,” Florida Hurricane, Box 8, 11 September 1935, 1–14. Ernest Hemingway, “Who Murdered the Vets? A First-Hand Report on the Florida Hurricane,” *New Masses*, Vol. XVI, No. 12, 9–1. “The Eavesdropper” reported that names of four former Winooski CCC veterans appeared on the casualty lists (*BDT*, 21 September 1935, 2).

<sup>56</sup> *WR*, 1 January 1936, 1, 30 October 1935, 1.

<sup>57</sup> *WR*, 28 November 1934, 1, *BFP*, 27 December 1935, 1. *MEA*, 29 December 1935, 1. Lewis W. Sanford, a Barre native, became the senior chaplain of the CCC 6th District. Sanford graduated from the Chaplin Training School at Camp Taylor, Kentucky, and shipped overseas in 1918. Following the war Captain Sanford stayed in the reserves and came to Camp Wilson in July 1933.

<sup>58</sup> Ross Abare to Robert Fechner, 11 September 1937, Records of CCC, National Archives, College Park, Maryland (hereafter NACP), RAG 35, Box 219.

<sup>59</sup> *BDT*, 22 July 1933, 8.

<sup>60</sup> *WR*, 9 February 1938, 1, *Gazette*, 1 December 1934, *WR*, 23 March 1938, 1. George Walker, 72 years old, was recognized as the oldest member of the CCC at Winooski, and Francis Wilcox at 23, “a veteran of the Nicaraguan campaign,” the youngest.” *MEA*, 4 November 1933, 8, *BDT*, 23 April 1934, 8.

<sup>61</sup> *BDT*, 25 July 1933, 8.

<sup>62</sup> Doherty and Emidy, *Historic Documentation*, 22.

<sup>63</sup> *Afro-American (Baltimore)*, 29 July 1933, 23, 23 September, 1933, 14.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 29 July 1933, 23.

<sup>65</sup> “Yearbook,” 36, *BDT*, 20 June 1934, 2.

<sup>66</sup> *MEA*, 22 July 1933, 8, 1 August 1933, 1.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 14 July 1934, 8, *BDT*, 21 August 1933, 1.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 September, 1933, 1 June 1935, 8. By March, 1934, the Barre police were also sending the intoxicated men back to camp, March 12, 1934.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 24 November 1933, 8, Arthur O’Hara, editor, *Goldbricker*, 5 November 1934, 3, *BDT*, 15 March 1934, 8.

<sup>70</sup> *BDT*, 12 April 1934, 1 and 13 November 1933, 1.

<sup>71</sup> “Members of C.C.C. Who Died in Service,” Vermont CCC Collection, Norwich University, p. 1. One of the men killed, “Freddy” Ives of Torrington, Connecticut, was an orderly at the district headquarters in Montpelier who fell off the Main Street Railroad bridge while returning to camp on a Saturday night. “The Eavesdropper” described Ives as being a comedian and friend of dogs who missed him. He was survived by a wife and a 12 year-old daughter (*BDT*, 3 September 1935, 1, and 14 September 1935, 2, *MEA*, 1 December 1933, 2).

<sup>72</sup> Interview with Elsie Beard, 22 January 2004.

<sup>73</sup> *BDT*, 19 July 1933, 8.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, “Eavesdropper,” 27 June 1934, 2. The author would enjoy learning what became of Lila Culver.

<sup>75</sup> *MEA*, 23 August, 2.

<sup>76</sup> *BDT*, 29 May 1935, 2.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 22 February 1934, 1.

<sup>78</sup> Numbers for the entire state: 927 businesses in 1929, 530 in 1933; 27,421 wage earners in 1929, 15,038 in 1933; wages paid in 1929, \$33,809,987, down to \$12,346,113 in 1933; value of products produced in 1929 \$143,522,547, to \$56,623,538 in 1933 (*Ibid.*, 6 May 1935, 1).

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 4 February 1934, 4, 5 June 1935, 6.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 20 July 1933, 8, 21 July 1933, 8.

<sup>81</sup> Merrill, *Roosevelt's Forest Army*, 23, *BDT*, 25 October 1933, 1, *MEA*, 21 February 1934, 1, *Gazette*, 17 November, 1, *BDT*, 20 December 1933, 1, 8 February 1934, 1.

<sup>82</sup> *BDT*, "Eavesdropper," 26 August 1933, 8, 2 December 1933, 2.

<sup>83</sup> *Yearbook*, 55–67, *BDT*, 7 March 1935, 5.

<sup>84</sup> Republican Representative Charles A. Plumley, whose father had also been a member of Congress, served from January 1934 to January 1951. He graduated from Norwich University and served as its president from 1920–1934. In 1934 he "described President Roosevelt as the 'most self-ish' man who ever sat in the White House." (*BDT*, 24 August 1934, 1), *WR*, 7 August 1935, 2.

<sup>85</sup> *BDT*, 27 July 1933, 8. Rather reticently, the *Barre Daily Times* reported: "On their part, the people of Barre and vicinity will miss the colorful life furnished by the presence of the C.C.C.'s." (7 December 1935, 4).

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., "Eavesdropper," 3 November, 1934, 2.

<sup>87</sup> *BFP*, 3 August 1936, 1.