

# THE LAY *of* THE LAND

News from the Madison Land Conservation Trust

SPRING 2015

## Preserving a slice of American history beside a Madison hiking trail

**Daniel Hand students and MLCT volunteers restore CCC Camp Hadley**

**THE WHOLE THING STARTED** in the fall of 2013, when Daniel Hand High School sophomore **Sam Wilson** decided to do something about the overgrown, crumbling remains of the stone structures he saw while hiking a Land Trust trail near his home. An old sign at the trailhead referred to these remnants as the site of “Camp Hadley.”

He didn’t realize it, but he was about to set in motion an enormous project involving dozens of Madison residents of all ages. It would lead to the discovery (or for many of the older volunteers, the rediscovery) of a fascinating episode in American history—the Civilian Conservation Corps program (CCC).



to as “Roosevelt’s Tree Army,” they built 125,000 miles of roads and 13,100 miles of foot trails, and planted more than 3 billion trees nationwide.

**Camp Hadley** was one of the 2,600 CCC camps built and operated in the US—and one of 23 in Connecticut—from 1933 to 1942. It occupied several acres of land in what is today Cockaponsett State Forest. And the MLCT Camp Hadley Trail, a 1.1 mile trail that begins at a trailhead on Copse Road, runs right by it.

Soon, **Joe Oslander**, MLCT board member and long-time dedicated volunteer, got a message from Sam’s dad: Sam and his friends wanted to clean up the CCC site at Camp Hadley.

### **Mobilizing a multi-generational team**

Joe put Sam in touch with **Jason Engelhardt**, DHHS math teacher and facilitator of the school’s “Woodsy Club,” where kids with an interest in the outdoors get together to learn about outdoor skills, the local forest environment, and native cultures. The Woodsy Club was intrigued with the idea, and they joined forces with Sam and the MLCT to clean up and research the history of Camp Hadley.

*continued*



### **What was the Civilian Conservation Corps?**

The CCC is not well-known by today’s young people, but the program was critically important in its time—the lean years of the Great Depression. The CCC program provided housing, food and income for nearly 3.5 million unemployed young men (and a few women). Sometimes referred

**TOP RIGHT:** The original recreation hall at Camp Hadley.

**ABOVE LEFT:** What remains of the fireplace from the Chief Forester’s cabin.



THE DANIEL HAND WORK CREW:  
(top, L-R) Bridget Gautrau, Alicia Imbergamo, Portia Blanchard, Taylor Day, Cecilia Bueno; (bottom, L-R) Jason Engelhardt, Ryan Handelman, Jack Dobson, Sam Wilson, Dan Weinreb

20 green marker signs to indicate the locations of the camp facilities, including the water pumping station, the recreation hall, the latrine, the barracks, and the infirmary.

Work on the site continued throughout 2014, and is still ongoing. Joe and Jason estimate that the volunteers have put in around 200 hours of labor to date.

“The first thing we did,” said Jason, “was to make a ‘to-do’ list of all the work we wanted to accomplish, and we worked with the kids to problem-solve how to do them.” The top items on the list?

- **Get permission** from the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to undertake this project on state park land (*Joe took care of this*)
- **Create and install** a large interpretive sign with a map, photos and a brief history of the camp site (*the kids took this on*)
- **Place markers** at each of the building sites and points of interest in the camp (*adult volunteers handled this*)
- **Clean up the dense overgrowth** of vegetation and trash that had accumulated over the decades since the camp was closed (*everyone worked together on this*).

### The kids take on the interpretive sign

It became clear pretty quickly that creating a beautiful and informative interpretive sign was no simple thing. There was historical research, writing and graphic design to be done. And somehow, the \$1,000 cost to fabricate it would have to be raised.

Jason and the Woodsy Club recruited a sophomore with an interest in history to do the research and writing—**Liam McCarthy** (see the text he wrote as it appears on the sign on p. 3). **Catherine Peng**, junior and member of the DHHS Art Club, designed the sign in Adobe Photoshop, integrating a map and archival photos with Liam’s text. And **Portia Blanchard**, sophomore, applied for a grant from the **Pardee Youth Fund**—a trust fund administered by the First Congregational Church of Madison—to pay for the sign. They were delighted to provide the money.

### Camp Hadley Blitz Days

April vacation, 2014, brought the “Camp Hadley Blitz.” About a dozen student volunteers came to Camp Hadley on three mornings, along with several MLCT adult volunteers, to clear the site.

According to Joe, the project wouldn’t have succeeded without the kids: “This was a monster-sized project—we needed the kids to help us get a jump start on it. The progress we made together gave us an incentive to make certain we got the signs made to mark the points of interest.”

Joe and his volunteers installed the kids’ large interpretive sign as well as

### If not for the MLCT, it would never have happened

“If there wasn’t a Land Trust trail out there, Sam wouldn’t have found it and we wouldn’t be talking about this project today,” said Joe.

This project has had a significant impact on Madison’s natural and historical resources, and on the kids and adults that donated their smarts, time and sweat to make it happen.

“Thanks to the Land Trust, we can keep Madison’s local treasures—both our natural history and our social history—safe for the future,” said Jason. “Discovering and sharing an appreciation for the history of Camp Hadley with the whole range of generations—high school students, youngish teachers like myself, Land Trust volunteers who may be empty nesters—was inspiring for all of us.”

### Join the Camp Hadley restoration project.

The MLCT would love to install more interpretive signs at Camp Hadley, providing more of the historical narrative for visitors to this important historical site. If you are interested in supporting this effort, please contact Mike Maloney at [mike@maloneyllc.com](mailto:mike@maloneyllc.com)

### In their own words

DHHS student volunteers share their thoughts about working on project

“I had no idea that conservation camps existed, let alone Camp Hadley right down the street from my house in Madison. I’ve always been intrigued by our nation’s history, so I was very interested in restoring the camp and learning about how people lived during such a difficult time period. Now, anyone can visit and see how the camp was run decades ago.”

—**Sam Wilson**, junior

“This camp held a community, giving many hope and a reason to live. Knowing that we put forth our effort on the same ground as the original members of Camp Hadley really made us feel like we could make an impact.”

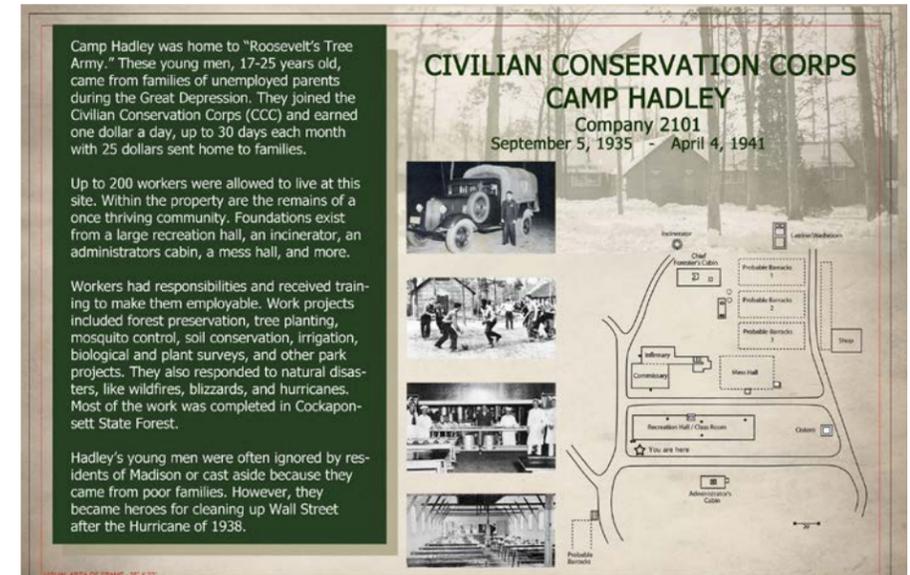
—**Portia Blanchard**, then a sophomore

“It’s important to make sure history doesn’t get forgotten. It’s surprising that this camp, made during the Great Depression in our town of Madison, is practically unknown to everyone here. We dug up a bunch of artifacts, like a light bulb and some old cans. We started playing anthropologist by googling the items to learn more about the time period.”

—**Bridget Gautrau**, junior

“On the first day, the sites were covered in leaves and branches, and weren’t very identifiable. By the end of the first day alone, we had nearly cleared several sites and by the end of the week everything was cleared, including a newly restored trail. Working as a team was so efficient—we accomplished a lot in a short time.”

—**Alicia Imbergamo**, junior



### Who were the men of Camp Hadley?

From the text of the new Camp Hadley interpretive sign (pictured above),  
By **Liam McCarthy**

Camp Hadley was home to “Roosevelt’s Tree Army.” These young men, 17–25 years old, came from families of unemployed parents during the Great Depression. They joined the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and earned one dollar a day, up to 30 days each month with 25 dollars sent home to families.

Up to 200 workers were allowed to live at this site. Within the property are the remains of a once thriving

community. Foundations exist from a large recreation hall, incinerator, administrators cabin, and mess hall.

Workers had received training to make them employable. Work projects included forest preservation, tree planting, mosquito control, soil conservation, irrigation, biological and plant surveys and park projects. They also responded to natural disasters, like wildfires, blizzards, and hurricanes. Most of the work was done in Cockaponsett State Forest.

Hadley’s young men were often ignored by Madison residents because they came from poor families. But, they became heroes for cleaning up Wall Street after the Hurricane of 1938.

### You’re invited! Camp Hadley, April 25, 11 AM

**Join us for a celebration** of the newly restored Camp Hadley. This event marks the completion of a collaborative effort between MLCT volunteers, students from Daniel Hand High School, and CT DEEP to revive the history of CCC Camp Hadley. Joe Oslander and his volunteers from MLCT, along with Jason Engelhardt with student volunteers from DHHS, will unveil an interpretive sign and share improvements to the landmark trail. Historian Marty Podskoch will tell the story of Roosevelt’s “Tree Army.” A short hike will follow the talk where visitors can appreciate the remains of original structures with the volunteers who brought them back to prominence.

**Meet at the trailhead on Warpas Road**, just north of Green Hill Road.

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**TAKE A HIKE!**

**2015 Hike Schedule**

For complete descriptions, maps and directions, visit our website. Check back throughout the year for updates.

**SUNDAY, MARCH 1 AT 1:00 PM**

**Winter Tree Identification**

Neck River Uplands South with  
Susannah Graedel

**SATURDAY, APRIL 25 AT 11:00 AM**

**CCC Camp Hadley**

Camp Hadley Trail

**SATURDAY, MAY 2 AT 8:00 AM**

**Spring Birding Hike**

Papermill Trail with Mike DiGiorgio

**SATURDAY, MAY 16 AT 10:00 AM**

**Wildflower Hike**

A joint hike with the Rockland  
Preserve. Led by Michael Donoghue

**SUNDAY, JUNE 7 AT 1:00 PM**

**CT Trails Day Amphibian Hike**

Blinnshed Loop with Kealoha  
Freidenburg and Dave Skelly

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 8:30-10 PM**

**Creatures of the Night**

Bauer Park. An evening field walk with  
John Himmelman

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3 AT 10:00 AM**

**Fall Hike**

Indian Rock Shelters Trail with  
Mike Maloney

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 25 AT 6:45 PM**

**Autumn Moonlight Walk**

Garvan Trail at the Surf Club



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