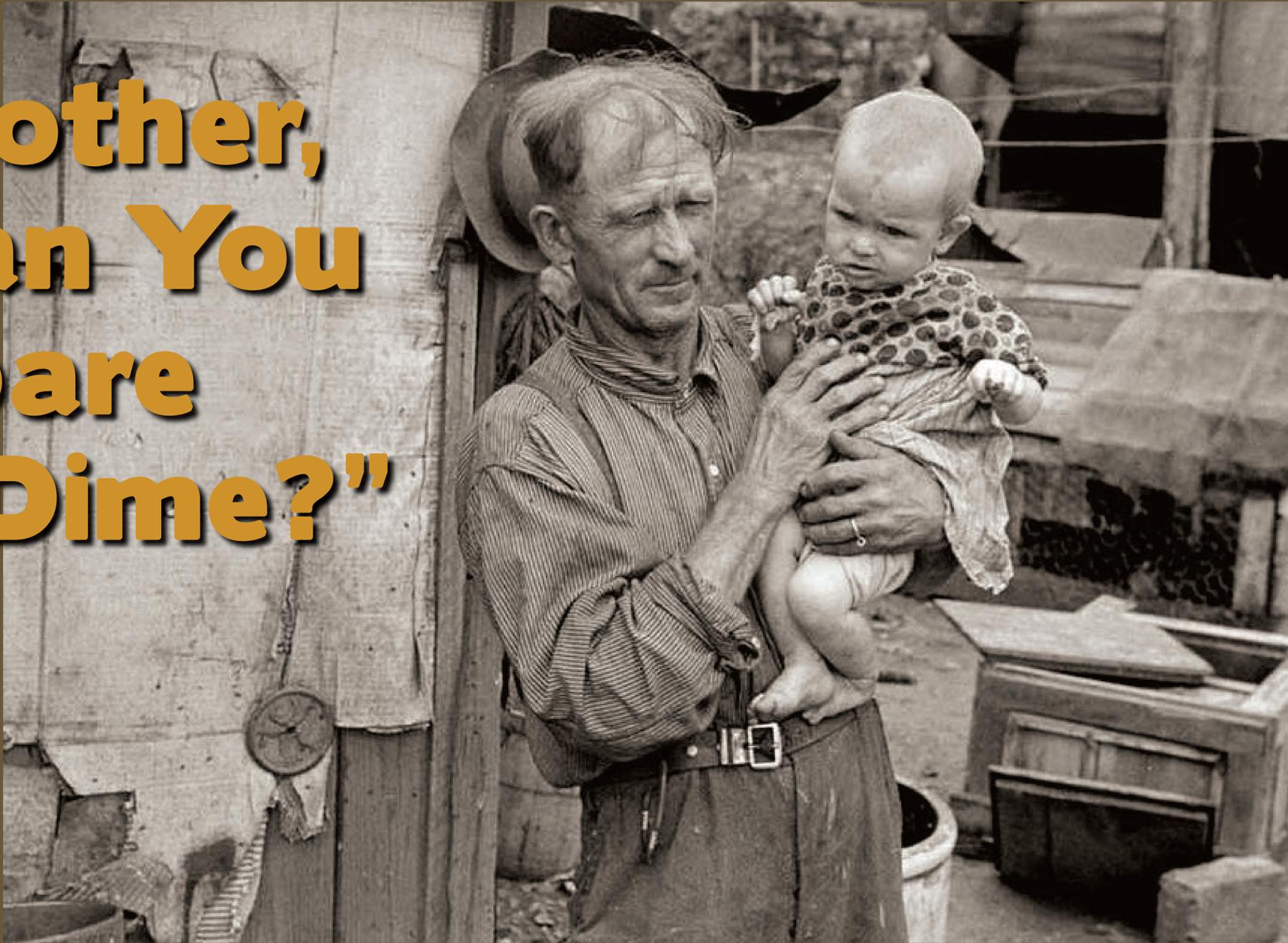


# “Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?”

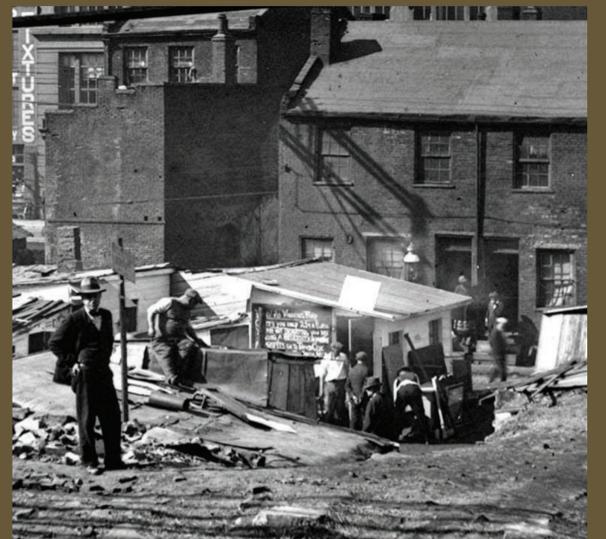


**These haunting lyrics, sung by Bing Crosby in 1932, reflected the miserable conditions millions of Americans faced during the Great Depression.**

In late October of 1929, the American economy, which had seen extensive growth during the 1920s, crashed. Investors lost most of their money, and hundreds of thousands of families lost most or all of their savings due to the closing of hundreds of banks nationwide. Hundreds of thousands of businesses shut their

doors, leaving millions unemployed. Economic hardships and financial ruin mark the era which is now called the ‘Great Depression,’ or the time between the stock market crash in October 1929 to the United States’ entry into World War II in December 1941.

Although some wealthier Americans retained enough money to weather the storm, millions of others were not as lucky. In Pennsylvania alone, around 30% of all working-age men were unemployed, with another 40% employed only part-time. Families unable to pay their mortgages had to foreclose their farms and homes. Riots broke out in several cities over food. In one rural Iowan town, a judge was nearly lynched after he was abducted from his courtroom by angry farmers. With so many



*Communities of the homeless, such as this one in Pittsburgh sprang up in cities across the nation. These camps were mockingly called ‘Hoovervilles’ by their inhabitants.* Courtesy of the University of Pittsburgh Library System: Historic Pittsburgh: Strip District Hooverville.

*TOP: During the Depression, being unemployed meant being without pay—and for many, no pay meant going days at a time without food.* Courtesy of National Geographic, Migrant Fathers: Tender Portraits of Dust Bowl Dads.

desperate unemployed men wandering the streets, violence seemed all but certain.

However, in 1932, then Democratic governor of New York Franklin D. Roosevelt campaigned to help fix the economy and to provide jobs through government action, promising a ‘New Deal’ for all Americans.



*A very ironic photograph, where the ‘ideal’ American life is contrasted with the reality of bread lines and unemployment.*

Courtesy of The Guardian, ‘Families Were devastated’: looking back on the Great Depression via art.



# “Happy Days Are Here Again!”



A 1941 poster advertising the benefits of enrolling in the CCC. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, A young man's opportunity for work, play, study & health / Bender, made by Illinois WPA Art Project, Chicago.

TOP: Roosevelt meets with an enthusiastic group of farmers in North Dakota. Many programs created by the New Deal were designed to help struggling farmers, and some CCC projects involved working on private land to improve soil quality.

Courtesy of The Living New Deal.

The title of this popular song used by Roosevelt's presidential campaign reflected the hope that many Americans felt after the 1932 election. However, there was still a major obstacle to economic recovery – the national unemployment rate was near an astounding 25%.

After taking the oath of office in March of 1933, President Roosevelt followed through on his promise of a 'New Deal' and took swift action. His 'New Deal' helped to create several 'alphabet' agencies, such as the PWA, CWA, SES, and countless others. The main goal of these agencies was to help stimulate the economy by expanding public infrastructure and providing government-paying jobs for the millions of unemployed.

One such 'alphabet' agency was the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). The CCC was officially signed by FDR into law on March 31, 1933, for the purpose of providing jobs to the hundreds of thousands of young unemployed men then roaming the country. To accomplish this goal, however, Roosevelt needed to figure out how his plan would be carried out. Where would



President Roosevelt eats lunch with enrollees at a camp, c. 1933. Roosevelt considered the CCC his 'pet project' and was deeply involved in its early stages, irritating some administrators.

Courtesy of The National Park Service, The Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Park Service, 1933-1942: An Administrative History.

these men work? What would they do?

To Roosevelt, the answers lie in the nation's many forests and parks. Due to decades of mismanagement and neglect, these forests and parks were facing attacks from many fronts, including wildfires and invasive diseases. Therefore, Roosevelt decided to put those 'neglected' youths to work in the 'neglected' forests and parks of the nation so that they might both be rescued.

# A Day in "Roosevelt's Tree Army"



**T**he army was in charge of the Civilian Conservation Corp's organization and the enrollee's day began promptly at 6 AM.

The bugler sounded reveille, and enrollees gathered for breakfast at 7 AM. Afterwards, enrollees either walked or were trucked to their worksites. Some tasks done by enrollees at S-63 and at CCC camps across the nation included planting trees, clearing undergrowth, felling diseased trees, fighting forest fires, and constructing and maintaining park roads. Some camps undertook larger projects,

including the construction of dams, such as the one seen at Poe Valley. After severe weather events, including the Lock Haven flood of 1936, local communities often called on nearby CCC camps to provide needed to assist with recovery efforts.

After returning to camp, washing up, and eating supper at 5 PM, enrollees could spend their downtime at the camp's recreation hall. There, enrollees could

engage in recreational activities such as reading, playing in one of the camp's many sports leagues, or just lounging about and listening to the day's news on the radio before 'lights-out' at 10 PM.

Also available to enrollees were educational and vocational courses, ranging from English to blacksmithing to 'social courtesy' lessons. These courses were created to both help finish an enrollee's education and to provide basic 'on the job training,' which would help polish their resumes and make them more employable after leaving camp.



*As they did not return to camp until dinner, enrollees in the field were often served lunch from the back of 'chow-trucks,' as seen here at S-63.* Courtesy of Bill Marcum



*Enrollees were expected to keep their barracks in tip-top shape for the camp commander's inspection, as seen here at camp S-63 'Poe Valley.'*

Courtesy of Bill Marcum

*TOP: Enrollees, cleaned up and wearing their "dress" uniforms after the day's work, waiting in line to enter the Mess Hall for the evening meal.*

Courtesy of Bill Marcum



# The Popular CCC

**F**rom April 1933 until the Corps' end on July 1st, 1942, 2,926,638 young men aged 17-25 nationwide found employment with the CCC.

Pennsylvania itself boasted 184,916 total enrollees, a number surpassed only by New York. These men came from all types of ethnic, religious, and educational backgrounds. However, they were all united by the fact that 60-70% of them had no prior workforce experience and were unemployed, with bleak hopes for their own future.

Despite the Depression being caused by events outside their control, many of these unemployed men thought that their economic hardships were their own fault. They felt as if they were a burden on their families, and many fell into bouts of depression because they were out of a job and couldn't provide for their family.

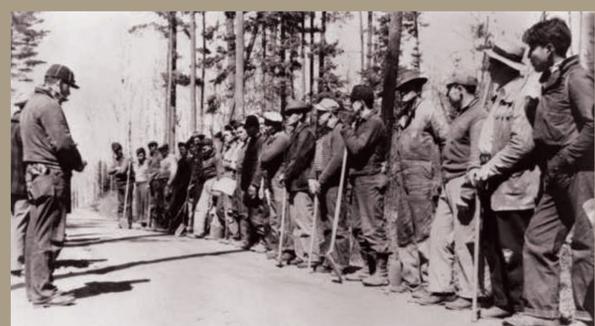
However, the CCC gave many of

these desperate men hope. To an enrollee, it was a way to prove his own worth, because \$25 of his \$30 a month paycheck was sent back home. Many enrollees thus became proud of their service and left the CCC with a renewed sense of pride and accomplishment. Many enrollees also formed lifelong friendships with those they met in camps. To one enrollee, the CCC was "the greatest experience in my life."

*TOP: A work detail from camp S-121 'Monument,' another one of Centre County's eight CCC camps. Courtesy of the Centre County Historical Society.*

## Separate, but Not Equal

Even though in 1933 around 25% of working age men were unemployed, unemployment among African Americans was around 50%. These men faced more challenges than their White counterparts due simply to the color of their skin. Native American enrollees, who already faced widespread poverty on their reservations due to decades of govern-



*Native American enrollees in Minnesota assembled for work. Courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society, Civilian Conservation Corps-Indian Division.*

ment neglect, also faced similar discrimination.

Despite all enrollees working on similar projects, and despite that the official act creating the CCC prohibited discrimination, non-White enrollees were not treated equally by administrators and nearby communities.

An example of this can be seen in 1941, when a proposal to transfer a CCC company composed of African American veterans into camp S-63, 'Poe Valley,' faced opposition from local residents. The residents sent their complaints to Senator Joseph Guffey, who then forwarded them to CCC



*A work detail from camp S-62 'Penn Roosevelt,' which was Centre County's only segregated CCC camp. The men dressed in white are LEMs, or 'Local Experienced Men,' who were skilled local laborers hired as foremen. Courtesy of The Pennsylvania Parks & Forests Foundation, The "Maroon Devils" of Company 361-C: Sports at Camp S-62.*

director James McEntee. Guffey said that according to 'concerned' constituents, the veterans ought to be transferred to an area "of their own people." However, this request was ignored by the army, and the transfer went on as planned.