

# THE CIVIL HISTORY

The Regional Newsletter of  
The Friends of the National Archives—Southeast Region and  
The National Archives at Atlanta

April, 2012

## Some Things are Worth Waiting For....

On April 2nd at 9:00 the National Archives was scheduled to release the 1940 Census. Census records are the only records that theoretically describe the entire population of the United States on a particular day. The answers to the new questions—and the old—tell us, in detail, what the United States looked like on April 1, 1940 and what issues were most relevant to Americans after a decade of economic depression.

A crowd gathered at the National Archives at Atlanta for the event. For the first time, the census was to be released free via the website of the National Archives. The response was unprecedented and strained the host servers.

In 1940, as in the past, the country was divided into enumeration districts, i.e. EDs. An enumerator went house-to-house asking questions. There were 120,000 enumerators in 1940.

### The Great Depression

The Great Depression, which began with the Wall Street Crash in 1929, was a defining period of American history. When the census was taken in 1940 the country was just beginning to emerge from that dreadful period of American history. Questions in the 1940 census attempted to put a picture and a voice on that period of crisis.

By 1932 the unemployment rate had soared past 20 percent. Thousands of banks and businesses had failed. Millions were homeless. Men (and women) returned home from fruitless job hunts to find their dwellings padlocked and their possessions and families turned into the street. Many drifted from town to town looking for non-existent jobs.



*I saw and approached the hungry and desperate mother, as if drawn by a magnet. . . I did not ask her name or her history. She told me her age, that she was thirty-two. She said that they had been living on frozen vegetables from the surrounding fields, and birds that the children killed. She had just sold the tires from her car to buy food. There she sat in that lean-to tent with her children huddled around her .*

—Dorothea Lange

## The Dust Bowl

*The Dust Bowl*, a two-part, four-hour documentary from Ken Burns which airs on PBS in the fall of 2012, chronicles this critical moment in American history in all its complexities and profound human drama.

It is part oral history, using compelling interviews of 26 survivors of those hard times—what will probably be the last recorded testimony of the generation that lived through the Dust Bowl. Filled with seldom seen movie footage, previously unpublished photographs, the songs of Woody Guthrie, and the observations of two remarkable women who left behind eloquent written accounts, the film is also a historical accounting of what happened and why during the 1930s on the southern Plains.

## Home School History

Students who are home schooled and their parents gather at the National Archives at Atlanta each month for hands-on activities designed around original primary source documents. Sessions for April and May include:

April 18, 2012:

**Documents of the Manhattan Project and NASA Lab: Exploring the Space Program.**

May 16, 2012:

**Home School History Expo: Student Projects, Quiz Bowl, and Awards**

For more information contact Joel Walker, Education Specialist at the National Archives at Atlanta, at [Joel.Walker@nara.gov](mailto:Joel.Walker@nara.gov).

## Our Mark on This Land: A Guide to the Legacy of the Civilian Conservation Corps in America's Parks

by Ren and Helen Davis

Over the nine years that the Civilian Conservation Corps was in existence, more than three million enrollees worked in more than 700 local, state, and national parks and, in doing so, helped to create a distinct and lasting imprint on the forests, road, trails, waters, and buildings of the nation's parks that generations have since come to recognize and value as important parts of their outdoor experiences.

Authors Ren and Helen Davis recently published a book on the amazing legacy of the CCC, and they will present a program at the *National Archives at Atlanta on Saturday, April 14, 2012, at 2:00*. For more information, call 770-968-2555.



The CCC at work. Photographs from the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, NY



## Civilian Conservation Corps

The Civilian Conservation Corps began on March 31, 1933, as part of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal. The CCC, also known as the Emergency Conservation Work (ECW) Act, was established to combat two growing problems in the United States in the 1930's: increasing numbers of unemployed young men and declining natural resources. The CCC would become one of the most successful and remembered experiments of the New Deal, employing over three million young men.

By 1935, over 2,650 camps had been established in all states, as well as, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands; and more than 600,000 people were working for the CCC. In national and state parks, the enrollees built roads and bridges, constructed fire breaks and drainage ditches, cleared campgrounds, planted trees and tried to control insect populations.

By mid-year 1941, due to desertion, lack of applicants and poor public opinion, the CCC was in a serious decline. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, focus shifted away from the CCC's domestic improvement projects to national security issues. As a result, on July 1, 1942, Congress abolished the Civilian Conservation Corps.

### Forest Service

The Forest Service is an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which began with the Forest Reserve Act of 1891. This act allowed the president to establish forest reserves and create national parks. Presidents dedicated to preserving U.S. natural resources, such as Franklin Delano Roosevelt, ensured the success of the Forest Service by encouraging Congress to fund scientific research and agencies like the Civilian Conservation Corps. The Forest Service, along with the CCC, preserved countless acres of land and built national parks across the country.

Records relating to the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the custody of the National Archives at Atlanta are found within four main record groups; RG 75 Bureau of Indian Affairs, RG 95 U.S. Forest Service, RG 114 Soil Conservation Service and RG 142 Tennessee Valley Authority. The records include maps, photographs, and textual records.

WE'RE ON THE WEB!  
WWW.FRIENDSNAS.ORG

## Meet John Philip Colletta for a day-long workshop on finding your immigrant ancestors

John Philip Colletta, one of America's most popular genealogical lecturers, will conduct a workshop at the National Archives at Atlanta.

When: August 24, 2012

Time: 10:00—4:00

Cost: \$20

**Sponsored by the Friends of the National Archives, Southeast Region.**

**For information call 770-968-2555.**



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