

# THE HAWKINS FAMILY

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BY

JOHN H. HAWKINS

*to Margaret  
Dad Hawkins*

A Family History and Life Stories

Compiled by

John Henry Hawkins

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**John H. Hawkins**  
**CCC Camp**  
**Picture taken about 1934**

## MY WORK IN OHIO

In the fall of 1929 Ray Bower was working for the Ohio Department of Forestry. He called to tell me that the department was going to hire a man to survey the boundaries of the state forests. I went to Wooster, Ohio for an interview, used Ray as a reference, and was offered the job. I was based at Chillicothe, provided a Ford pickup, paid expenses when away from Chillicothe, and received a salary of \$90 per month. I reported to work on Columbus Day 1929 on the Shawnee Forest and was to live at the ranger station.

The man in charge of the Shawnee Forest was Carlos Graham, a rather short, stocky man of about 45 to 50 years of age. He and his family lived in the ranger station. I lived with them. The station was at the northeast corner of the forest. I believe that at some time he had worked for the sheriff department of Scioto County. He was a native of the area so knew many people and was familiar with a lot of the forest area. He had also worked for the Flag estate that owned extensive timberland around the forest areas.

My headquarters was to be at Chillicothe where I worked in cold weather. In the summer I worked out of Portsmouth on the Shawnee Forest. The Shawnee Forest, about 25,000 acres, was fifteen miles northwest of Portsmouth. There was no well at the ranger station. We used and drank rainwater from a cistern. The Scioto Trail Forest was ten miles south of Chillicothe and was only about 3,000 acres in size. The forests were in the hills of southeastern Ohio and were about 600 feet high. I was to do boundary survey work on both forests.

Both of the forests were in the Virginia Military District. After the Revolutionary War the soldiers were given a bonus, which was a specified amount of land for each man depending on his length of service. Some grants, called "patents," were small, some large. The land was to be taken up within the District at any place in any shape or form as desired. Corners were marked on trees or stones and sometimes with buried charcoal. When the pioneers got about halfway across northern Ohio a new method of land division and description was used. It is in squares called sections, as in our area in Michigan.

In the Military District the property description was a meets and bounds system. Such as "Beginning at a stone or a tree, thence N 30 degrees east 10 chains to a tree, thence N 10 degrees east a specified number of chains to a stone fence N 25 degrees West, 40 chains to something marked, then up to the point 30 degrees west 30 chains to the top of the ridge, thence W 50 degrees 10 chains," etc., for the rest of the property. I remember one deed said, "Out the ridge top to the bear wallow (mud hole)." Of course the bear had been gone for a long time. The early settlers usually took the flat land along the creek bottoms first and later on the hills, generally in odd shapes. Some of the descriptions sort of matched the topography. There are no straight north and south lines. Some areas could have up to as many as 40 to 50 sides and others with only 6 to 10. In some way the descriptions were "fudged" so that some grants contained two to four times the acreage called for in the patent.

Most of the land was purchased by the forestry department during the depression when many of the hills were for sale as money was needed by all and land was not desired. Most of it was purchased for two to three dollars per acre. They tried to keep the purchases in block acres to make a solid unit for the forest. Nearly all of the land

purchased was covered with a growth of pine and hardwoods of mostly oak and poplar. My job was to locate and mark the boundaries.

Carlos knew the hollows where the land was located and also many of the corners and lines but he did not know the exact lines of the properties. We spent a great deal of time together and he never got us lost. He usually selected the area where the boundary was to be located and marked.

I had no descriptions of any of the properties. Before work could be done it was necessary to go to the courthouse for descriptions. I spent a lot of time in the courthouse and learned to look up records. Knowing the former owner's name I could search the records and copy each description. We then went to the location where we were to do the fieldwork, looked up a starting point and got started.

The survey party was made up of two brush cutters and a rod man who was also the head tape man. The brush cutters cut a path through the woods where I directed. Distances were measured with a 100-foot steel tape. Carlos was most often the rear tape man. The head tape man also cut small stakes and numbered them in order to keep track of distances. The survey instrument had to be moved quite often because of the up and down hills and trees. In places the hills were steep and hard to climb. Using the four-inch compass needle in a transit is not a very accurate way for the location of boundaries. This is the manner in which the original survey lines were run and thus the only way to try and follow them. At Shawnee we surveyed many lines and marked many corners with 4- x 30-inch concrete posts. In July and August it was a real hot job with no air movement in the woods. We did not carry water for drinking. Sometimes at night with my meal I must have drunk about half a gallon of water.

One day when surveying we were caught in a rain. There was an old house along the road that we went into to eat our lunch. It had a dirt floor and only openings for windows. Sometime later when I went past there was a family living in it.

Sometimes the property was in two different valleys and when the lines went from one to another it created a little problem. We would be in one valley at night when we quit and the next morning we had to start at that point. We would drive up the new valley the next morning, which could be several miles around from the previous one. At times it was difficult to locate where we had quit the night before as many hills and woods look alike.

There was always a trail on the top of every ridge. Now and then we would find a rattlesnake or copperhead on a trail. One day when Carlos and I were going down a path where the brush was about hip high he stepped on a rattlesnake that was about 30 inches long. He had a double bit ax on his shoulder. He swung it down and hit the snake about ten inches back of its head and cut it in half.

One very hot summer day when we were surveying on the Scioto Trail Forest a storm came up very quickly. We were in the woods quite a little distance from our pickup. It rained real hard and of course we really got soaked. The temperature had been about 105 degrees. It was a cold windy storm which dropped the temperature down to the middle 70s. It took me nearly an hour to get to my rooming house. With the wet clothes and the temperature drop I thought I was going to freeze. I believe it was a good two hours, when eating supper, before I got warm.

At the Scioto Trail Forest for the survey work I was more or less on my own. The ranger was not a native so did not know the properties or many of the people. One winter I was given about twelve PWA (Public Work Administration) men to put to work. Another year it was WPA (Work Projects Administration) men. There was an area of planted trees which we hand mowed around and between. We also cleaned up around the ranger station.

I also helped fight some fires and plant trees. There was one section of the Shawnee Forest apart from the main forest that had a large flat hilltop. One spring I drove to the forest nursery over near Mareta and picked up 50,000 small short leaf pine seedlings for planting on the flat. We had to hire a mule team to take them up a very steep hill. We planted them in an old field using PWA labor. I have understood that it is a good stand and the trees are now 30 to 40 feet tall.

There were many moonshine stills in the hills. If we found them on the forest property we were to destroy them. One day we stopped at a spring in the woods which Carlos knew of to get a drink of water. When we got there we found a still in full operation. The men just left when they heard us coming. The still was running and had a gallon jug of new stuff still under it. I happened to be carrying my 38 special revolver that day so I shot holes in the condenser to destroy it and also shot the jug. When the jug broke the leaves started burning. There were ten or twelve barrels of mash that we emptied and used to put out the fire. Mash was corn, sugar and water that had fermented. The mash was boiled and the vapor collected and condensed in cooling coils and drained into jugs yielding corn whiskey.

One morning on the Scioto Trail Forest we worked up out of a valley and started down into the next one. We sent a driver down to the pickup where we had left it that morning to have him drive it up the valley where we were then working as it would save a long walk back through the woods for the whole crew. We had worked an hour or more cutting brush and hollering directions as we surveyed down the hillside. As we walked out for lunch, about halfway down the hill we came upon two men running a moonshine still on the state forest. They paid no attention to us. I drove into Chillicothe to the sheriff's office and swore out a warrant. A deputy was sent out to get them. When he got there they were still running the still. He took one man in and locked him up. It was six months before his trial and then they had a hung jury. In the fall when they had another trial they again wished me as a witness. I was in Syracuse at the time and so did not return.

During the depression some of the natives hewed railroad crossties for a living. On Saturday they would load them on their wagon and take them into Portsmouth to a tie buyer who had a contract with a railroad.

One day someone told Carlos that over in a certain hollow men were cutting and stealing railroad ties off the state land. He said we should go and check it out. I had to go to the courthouse and look up the description of the property. The next day we went up the hollow to make the survey. We soon had three or four natives following us in the woods. As it was in the fall all were wearing long coats. Upon returning to headquarters, after working a couple of days and being followed by the natives, Carlos said, "Did you know that they were all carrying guns and that I also had mine?" I did not know it. We

found that they had cut right to the line and had cut only one tree on the state land. We left and took no action.

It was difficult to make a living during the depression. Once I saw a man going to town with a three-foot "donut" on his wagon. This "donut" was made up of tall small trees that had been split and then wound up into the "donut." It must have been very heavy. I am real sure they were for barrel bands. The old slack cooperage barrels had wooden bands around them to hold them together. The wooden bands were flat on one side and round on the other. They were made from small green trees which had been split down the middle. A tie man may have been buying them. As times got better the people got jobs and quit this type of hard work.

North of Ironton there is some poor iron ore mixed through the hills. Most all of the small towns had Furnace on the last of their name, as in Franklin Furnace, because there was an iron-melting furnace in the town. I understand that some of the Civil War cannons were cast in the area.

The charcoal used in these iron furnaces was made locally in an old beehive-type kiln. A 25- to 30-foot area was cleared and leveled. Wood was cut about three feet long and was then set up on end all over the leveled area. Another layer was then set on top of it and then another layer. It was then completely covered with dirt except for one hole in the top. It looked like an old beehive. Holes were left in places around the bottom through which it was set afire. After it was all burning, which took two or three days, the holes were plugged. When the fire went out they had charcoal. They then mixed the iron ore and charcoal in a retort and fired it. When the iron melted it was drawn off into forms and molded into desired shapes. The retort unit was set on a hillside. It was loaded on the top level, the kiln was on the second level, and the forms for casting were on the lower third level. They were all small operations and did not last many years.

When living at the Shawnee Forest I had to go into Portsmouth to get a bath where there was a shower in a barbershop in the basement of a hotel. The Scioto River joined the Ohio River at Portsmouth. At this point the Scioto Valley was one and a half to two miles wide. A causeway had been built up about twelve feet high for the road from the town of West Portsmouth into Portsmouth. When the Ohio and Scioto rivers were at flood stage the causeway was often under water. One could drive through the water until it was about twelve inches deep, after that it was necessary to use the ferry. Corn was raised in the rich Scioto Valley. It was all picked by hand, as there were no mechanical corn pickers or combines. When there was a flood at corn harvest time the farmers would pick all day and night to try to save their crop.

The paddle wheel riverboats came up the Ohio River to Portsmouth every spring and summer and stayed a few days. One was a showboat, with a different play each night. The other went up the river at night for a moonlight cruise.

In the summer of 1931 my folks came to southern Ohio to visit me. One day we drove over into Hacking County where there were some state parks with overhanging rock caves. Along one of the roads we saw two yoke of oxen being driven from one logging job to another.

The summer of 1932 was very hot and dry. We had many forest fires. In open places where there were fires one would think that the fire was out only to look back and

see roots in the ground burning. It was so dry that the leaves on three-inch-diameter hardwood trees even burned off.

While fighting one fire I was a distance from the rest of the crew and on a very small branch of a stream. As I walked up the hollow I saw a small body of water about three feet across with a six-inch mud turtle in it. I threw the turtle out and took a small drink, as I was very dry and really thirsty. Later I discovered that there was a cabin up above in the hollow.

I always went home for Christmas.

I worked at this job from 1929-1932 on the Scioto Trail and the Shawnee Forest. In 1932 Ray Bower again called me, this time from Syracuse University where he was an extension forester, to say that 25 fellowships for graduate study in forestry were to be offered at NY State College of Forestry. I went to Syracuse to apply and was granted a fellowship which paid \$50 per month. A requirement of the fellowship was that I help undergraduate students with their surveying class. The one year Ray was out of school at Michigan State he worked for E. F. McCarthy who was in charge of the Central State Forest experiment station at Columbus, Ohio. Through Ray I became acquainted with him. McCarthy went back to Syracuse forestry school as an instructor. When I made application for the fellowship I had both of them as references.

## SARY ANN AND HER BASKETS

While I was working in southern Ohio the forest caretaker, Carlos Graham, told me about a woman who made baskets, so one day we went to see her. Sary Ann and her husband Mert were about 50 years old. They lived up a small hollow in the headwaters of the Ohio Brush Creek Valley. There was no road to her house, so the winding creek bed was used as the road. It was only a little wider than a car and about 3 feet below the banks. When the creek was up, one had to walk about one-half mile to their house. One day when Carlos Graham and I were there, she asked us to stay for dinner, which we did. The house was a typical small mountain clapboard house with a porch to sit on, no electricity, running water, or telephone. It was very clean, and the walls were papered with newspapers.

The slats used by Sary Ann to make baskets were strong and tough for weaving. They were cut from 10- to 12-inch white oak butt logs, 6 to 8 feet long. They were split many times into small strips until about 1/8-inch thick and 1-inch wide. She used an old Abraham Lincoln shaving horse to hold them as she worked to shape them down to the proper size with a jackknife. It was a long slow job. The slats were kept in the creek to keep them soft and pliable for weaving. The baskets were well made, very durable and strong. She charged from \$2 to \$4 for each basket. I had her make quite a few round and rectangular shopping baskets, about two pecks each, and a round clothes hamper. One day when I was there Sary Ann had no baskets for me. She said Mert "the SOB hasn't cut no timber for me."

Ray Bower, my friend at Syracuse, asked me to have her make a pack basket, as the baskets made in the Northeast were made from small black ash logs. The black ash logs were hammered to make them separate on the growth rings, then cut into strips for weaving. Black ash is not tough like white oak, so after some use they would break along the bottom at the bend. The white oak baskets were much more durable. The first pack basket Sary Ann made was not of good size or shape; she improved on the shape until they were very good. I mailed Ray about 25 of them to sell to his friends.

At one time Mert and his brother had been in a fight with a man who had a pistol, and Mert's brother was killed. Mert was up on a road bank when a shot hit him with a glancing blow beginning in the middle of his forehead just above his eye and came out near the hairline. The two scars were quite visible.

Shootings were quite common in the hills. There was one creek known as "Bloody Twin Creek" because of the shootings that had occurred there. I was in the cemetery where all of the Cooper men who had been shot were buried.

One day a man who was going to town in his car caught up to a fellow with a team of horses. The road was very narrow, and he blew his horn several times to get him out of the way so he could pass. The team driver became angry and refused to move over for some time. He went home, got his shotgun, and waited beside the road for the man in the car to return from town. After the car passed, he stepped into the road and shot through the back window, cutting the driver's silhouette on the windshield. He was not killed, but a lot of shot had to be removed from the back of his head!





**Mort and Sary Ann Cooper**



**Baskets made by Sary Ann in 1932  
Baskets are still in use today  
Picture taken December 1998**

## CCC CAMP

In the spring of 1933 F. D. Roosevelt established the Civilian Conservation Corps., known as the CCC. It was primarily for unemployed poor people and some World War I veterans. Camps for 200 men were built in forests, parks, flood control areas, etc., in cooperation with the State and Federal Forest and Park Services, who were to work the men. The Army housed, fed and clothed them.

My former boss in Ohio, O. A. Alderman, called me when I was at Syracuse, April 1933, and asked me to return to Ohio and manage a camp. I told him I wanted to finish the graduate program and get my degree, thinking that if I left school I would never return. He said OK, and promised me a camp when I returned. After graduation, with a master's degree in forest management, I went home for a week and then returned to Ohio. A new camp was just being set up, Shawnee #2, in the Shawnee Forest. Army tents had been set up and a few men brought in while the buildings were being built. When I arrived the Army personnel and work foremen started coming. We had to build a toolroom, shop, etc., for our use. Green hardwood lumber was used for the shop floor; the boards shrank as they dried, leaving large cracks between them. This made the sweeping and cleaning easy! The first winter the work personnel had to sleep in the toolroom. We had a wood-burning stove for heat if it got cold at night. The next summer the Army built a log cabin with a kitchen and dining area. The Army personnel lived in one end and work personnel in the other.

The early camps had a few black men in them along with some World War I veterans. Things did not work out well for the black men. I understand that Shawnee #2 was the first 100% black camp in the eastern US. A few men at a time were transferred from various camps to our camp until at one time we had 240 men. Some were veterans who did not stay long, and some were from the local Portsmouth area. One enrollee had done time in the Ohio Penitentiary in Columbus, two had been on Georgia chain gangs, and 15 were taken from the streets of Cleveland by the police and sent to us, as they did not wish them. We also had about 15 copper-colored boys from farms in eastern Ohio that were very good workers. The supervising Army men and work personnel were all white. There was a white camp over the hill about two miles from us and most of those boys were from cities in northeastern Ohio. The supervisors had some trouble getting them to work; none of my personnel would have traded camps.

We were never afraid of the enrollees. If any of them had ever attacked a foreman, others would have immediately beaten him up. They were a good bunch of boys who followed orders and did good work.

I was project superintendent in charge of the work program, and had an office building with a black office boy. We had a repair shop and hired a very good local mechanic who was about 55 to 60 years old. His name was Claude Wilford. He could do blacksmith work and even repair watches and automobiles. We hired local men for machine operators. The boy in charge of our toolroom had attended Case College in Cleveland for two years. Tools had to be sharpened and checked in and out each day so he had two helpers.

We had two half-blood Indians in the camp, both of whom were large, big-boned men. Mose Bradley, from Oklahoma, was a squad leader and also worked in the kitchen

at times. Mose Gains from Findley, Ohio, was the head cook. They could each handle a quarter of beef or a 100-lb. bag of potatoes in each hand and carry them into the kitchen. When the kitchen help became unruly or Mose Gains got mad at them he would grab a cleaver and quickly clear the kitchen.

The camps were run as a regular Army camp with squads and platoons. When the camps were first started, the Army said that the boys were to work 45 minutes and rest 15 minutes out of each hour. The Forest and Park Service quickly changed this rule, as they did not operate that way. The boys were turned over to us at 8 a.m., back to the Army at 12 noon, to us at 1 p.m., and back to the Army at 5 p.m. We had to transport the boys to and from the work site. The boys were paid \$5.00 per month, and their parents were sent \$25.00. If a boy would not work the only discipline we had was to report him to the Army and he was sent home.

Many black enrollees were transferred into our camp. Some of them had been squad leaders in their former camps. The captain in our camp reduced them to regular enrollees, as there were already squad leaders set up. This meant a pay cut for these men. They were not happy with this. Each morning the Army sergeant lined the men up by their squads for attendance and then turned them over to us for work. The captain must have heard something about their talk and feelings about being reduced in rank and that there might be some trouble, so one morning he showed up with his Army 45 on his hip and explained his policy. There was not a bit of trouble. The next day the Portsmouth daily paper carried large black headlines: "Army officer uses gun to maintain order in CCC Camp." Many of the new men left during the next few weeks because they were unhappy.

Our camp was established rather late in the program, and as a result, finding foresters, engineers, etc., to work as foremen was difficult because of the many camps across the US. Mr. Alderman hired all he could find and sent them to my camp to stay until he could assign them to a permanent camp. I thought he did it because he knew me from my prior work.

Our work included timber stand improvement, cutting logs, building a telephone line, building roads and small bridges, and building a house beside a pond. We also did fire fighting and operated a small portable sawmill, which one foreman owned. I laid out a road that was to be used for logging and fire protection up over a hill from one valley to another, and along a ridge.

We had four dump trucks, a stake truck, and a Cleatrac crawler tractor. This was before hydraulics, so the tractor blade could be raised and lowered only a small amount, and could not be set at an angle. When building a new road, at places the slope was so steep that the tractor could not be kept on the hillside. Using hand tools, we cut a "stair step" along the hill for the upper track to run in for making the first cut. The woods crew had to first cut the trees then the road crew burned the brush and blew out the stumps. We had one local road foreman, Claude Turner, who had worked for the county. He heard that the road commission had an old rock crusher that they were not using. We borrowed it, set up a rock quarry and crushed stone for surfacing the roads. We had an air compressor for drilling the rock. A man from Portsmouth liked to do the drilling, loading, and shooting. We built a storage house for the dynamite, which was delivered about one-half ton at a time.

In the summer the road crew often got into yellow jacket nests. To get rid of them they would douse the area with gasoline and burn them out. I happened along one dry hot day just as the foreman lit the match on the seat of his pants. He never let loose of the match as about 25 or 30 feet exploded in a big bang. We were more careful after that.

When we were called for a forest fire, every CCC boy wished to go. The trucks quickly became overloaded and we would have to take some people off before we could go to the fire. At one fire on a hilltop during the heat of the day, the fire got into a pine thicket. We decided to leave and, as we did, the fire crowned and the entire area burned with a roar in just a few minutes.

One winter, some of the foremen and I bowled in leagues twice a week in Portsmouth.

One of our machine operators lived on a farm a few miles from camp. He owned and flew a two-passenger open-cockpit plane. One summer he took most of us for a ride. I do not believe we were over 500 to 700 feet above the trees.

Claude Turner was a musket shooter around the area. Years later I knew Homer Dangler of Addison, who made old rifles and traveled to shooting events in many places. I had sold him curly soft maple plank for his gunstocks. One day I remarked that he should have known Claude, because he was quite interested in old rifles and shooting. He said, "I knew him and have shot at meets in Ohio with him." He told me that Claude had died the year before.

Bob Brush, one of the foresters, had helped blaze the north end of the Appalachian Trail for development prior to his service with the CCC.

It was interesting to me to see what became of some of the foremen. During the war M.H. Smith became a personnel hirer for the Army on the West Coast. M.C. Smith was a forestry graduate from Purdue. He was the work project superintendent after I left. The day after Pearl Harbor he enlisted in the Air Corp. He was a bright man who went up through the ranks to brigadier general and became the purchasing agent for the Air Corp. at the Pentagon. He was not a pilot but had his own private plane in England during the war.

Benn Hornbeck was a forestry foreman. He stood about 6' 2" and weighed about 120 lb. He had attended Ohio State for two years during the day and worked at a parking garage at night. When he came to the camp he was so tired that he slept most of the time for several weeks. He would even go to sleep when sitting and talking to us. He retired from managing Berea College forests and lives in Berea, Kentucky. I often stop and visit him on my way home from Florida.

One of the foresters was Bennie Cobb from Alabama. He could tell some ugly stories about how they treated black people. He said he once shot a man through the leg for lying to him. He left camp to work for the TVA program.

I resigned and left the camp in the summer of 1935 to go into the lumber business with my father.