



ONLINE

See more archival images of the AMC cup at outdoors.org/flashback.

The AMC cup, which dates back to the early 1900s, figures prominently in photos from the organization's archives.

CHEERS TO THE AMC CUP

BY || MARC CHALUFOUR

Early 19th century hikers didn't have much specialized gear. They wore cotton and wool and leather. But hiding in plain sight in many AMC photographs from the era is a trailblazing item: a tin cup, often seen dangling from backpacks or hanging by their wire handles from belts.

An ad in the back of a 1930 edition of *The Bulletin*, AMC's newslet-

ter at the time, offered these items, embossed with AMC's initials and "not readily attainable in the stores," for 20 cents. A year later, *The Bulletin* reported sales of 401 cups.

The simple, lightweight vessel has endured, even if its origin hasn't. Although commonly called "sierra cups" today, thanks to their popularization by the Sierra Club, the cups' design can be traced back to AMC. In *Voices for the Earth*, a 1979 anthology of Sierra Club stories, Ann Gil-

liam wrote, "If there is a badge and symbol of this organization it is that most useful of all mountain tools, the Sierra Club cup...patterned after a similar design used by the Appalachian Mountain Club."

Further evidence comes from David Brower, the Sierra Club's first executive director, who admitted in his 1990 autobiography, "the Sierra Club imitated the Appalachian Mountain Club's cup, but that is a secret." •

Images seen here appear courtesy of the AMC Library & Archives. Duplicates can be ordered for a fee. Funds support efforts to preserve the club's historical collections. Call 617-391-6629, visit outdoors.org/library, or e-mail amclibrary@outdoors.org for details.