

THE HISTORY OF CAMP WENDY

The history of the Girl Scouts of Ulster County is rich and full bodied as one steals the promo from a coffee campaign. Going through the Council's archives, one sees that 1916 was the actual date from which all events commenced.

The first camps were in Mt. Tremper and Phoenicia. One reads of community integration in those early years-The City of Kingston had helped transport sterile equipment to the outdoor site. It was the year of the influenza epidemic but Scouts ventured on to camp.

About 1923, Mrs. George Halliday – better known as Marion Borden, began offering her family site to be used by the girls. It was first used as a resident camp in 1924. Known today as Camp Wendy, the Wallkill camp is known to thousands. Marion Borden, heir to the Borden dairy conglomerate, was a woman who had known a lonely childhood. She was actively involved in the Council's programs and events. In particular, she loved the campers. Countless recollections are read in the 1920's archives. Her death in 1929 was noted and felt by all who knew her. Yet, she was to touch thousands of campers in the future.

Marion Borden bequeathed a portion of her family state to the Council along with \$10,000 for its maintenance. Ulster County Council was incorporated to legally accept the bequest. In 1930, the camp opened with enthusiasm. Girls created the Pioneer unit, parents of this decade helped build two bridges and repair the ever-growing number of buildings. During this time, the Masons allowed the use of the property to the West side of the lake. The property was “made whole”.

Camp Wendy, whose name is from the book, Peter Pan, and whose labeled sites are thematically found, i.e.: Greenwood, Lost Boys, Tinkerbell, etc., is 53.6 acres. Historically, it has always been a place of enjoyment and a provider in a time of need.

In 1940, the Camp continued with marked progress. In 1943, the Camp closed due to World War II. In the summers of '43, '44' and '45, the facility served as a Girl Scout administered Farm Workers' Camp. We were doing our part then on a national level. In 1946, camp could not reopen due to high inflation. Goods were just too dear for the repairs needed.

In 1947, camp resumed. It was in this summer that Camp Wendy was bombed. A Scout celebrating her birthday while away from her family enjoyed a surprise visit of a low-flying airplane. From this IFO (identified flying object), came a pack of gum with birthday wishes. Jaws were jawing all summer!

The fifties brought an era of financial concerns for Wendy. Until this point, the camp had been fairly self-sufficient, always in the black. Despite economic concerns, modernization hit Wendy! Electricity was installed! It seems the milkman was getting a new cooler and he offered his old one to the camp. With the help of Central Hudson and this man's generosity, warm showers can sometimes be found and our Brownies' latrines can be lighted!

To defray the costs of running a camp, our council instated cookie sales. The money reaches camp and camping activities through the efforts of those who enjoy camp

most – the girls. Camp has been closed due to financial problems twice – once in 1946 and twenty-three years later in 1969. Not a bad record for a sixty-year lifetime. In July 1977, a clear title to the entire 53.6 acres was granted to end the arrangement with the Masons.

Physically, Camp Wendy is laid out around Lake Louise (a/k/a/ Lake Elwood). As one enters camp, Borden Hall, the large dining hall/kitchen building is seen. Its fireplace is the center of activities for rainy evenings at Camp Wendy. Passing the shower house, maintenance shed and water cooler, one sees the beautiful purple martin houses near Martin Lodge and the flag pole. Martin Lodge is the staff house in the summer and a winter camping center for troops. In the main camp there is also a director's cabin/troop tool shed, the infirmary, cook's cabin, and two latrine sites. The poppy tree is to the southeast of the infirmary. Many home-sick campers have sent letters to Poppy during summer sessions. The mystery of their dear friend remains even in adults' memories of yesterday, as she would write back with the understanding and confidence-restoring love needed.

As one continues eastward through Greenwood, there are latrines, platform tents, and a kitchen site. Greenwood Lodge is there as well as the site of the old ice house. Across the wishing bridge and up the hill to Pioneer one goes. With familiar facilities as Greenwood, shower houses and a tulip tree grace this "mountainous" site. It has been a favorite of many Cadettes.

Venturing around the lake, one ascends to Romany. This unit is the highest in elevation and unique, as it does not have platform tents, but lean-tos. There are all the facilities here as in the other fore-to-mentioned sites but its physical detachment from the rest of the camp has always been special.

In order to continue around the lake, one must go single file across a small dam. Many fathers have built and rebuilt this tiny bridge throughout the years. Down the path and through the trees, one can picture the primitive site campers set every year on a tiny bit of cleared land bordered by the lake. One summer, a teepee was erected and habited by our Indians and Chief.

Not far from this site is Jungle. A favorite among Juniors, Jungle overlooks the lake to Pioneer. There is a nature ridge here that has fine specimens of flora and fauna along with charts and books for the interested Scout. The campers would cross Hook's Bridge daily to go to main camp.

Over a knoll and back to main camp, one passes the shores of Lake Louise. In the spring, the docks are set for the summer with a port for the canoes, rowboats, and dinghy. Above this lakefront center is the fenced in Olympic size pool constructed in 1972. It is not surprising for water activities and swimming to be important to the Scouts and counselors, this has traditionally been a main concern of Camp Wendy's visitors since 1923.

In November 1982, Camp Wendy was designated as a Lou Henry Hoover Memorial Sanctuary. Objectives of the program are to improve the environmental habitat of the site and to increase the environmental education potential for those using the site.