

## **The History of Camp Winnebago**

### **Before Scouting Arrived**

The hills and mountains of this area, now known as the Farney Highlands, were rugged with poor soil and few areas flat enough for farming. Native Americans may have been seen passing through the area on their travels between the Delaware River and the rich coastal shellfish beds to the east. Tough Norwegian farmers had migrated to the USA in the 1800's and established some dairy farms where they could throughout the hills. The Green Pond Golf Course was such a dairy farm. There were few homesteads in these rugged hills.

If you visited what is now Winnebago 100 years ago the land would appear very different. On the way up into our mountains from Denville and Rockaway Boro below one would have passed by extensive iron mining operations. The nearby Hibernia Mines, the Beach Glen Mines and others date back to before Revolutionary War times and some were active mines well into the first half of the 1900's. The iron ore was high grade and known as magnetite. It is dark and heavy and can be recognized by the way it moves a compass needle. Pieces of this rock can still be found as you hike the lower parts of the Four Birds Trail which starts in Hibernia. A railroad once carried the ore down out of the mountains. Mine slag, the rock left after the iron was removed from the ore, can be found along the road near the dam at the south end of Durham Pond. Mine slag was apparently used to create the earthen part of the dam.

The ruins of a nineteenth century iron furnace and the settlement that supported it are nearby at the south end of Splitrock Pond Reservoir.

### **Durham Pond**

In 1778, George Taylor, a signer of the Declaration of Independence and a partner of the Durham Furnace of Durham Pennsylvania, visited the Hibernia mines of N.J. The purpose of his visit is not clear but financial backing of the local mines and forges may have taken place. By 1849 the Durham Furnace company in Pa. was importing 66% of its iron ore from N.J. The high grade ore was transported west by the Morris Canal. Morris County records show that about 1800 Ebenezer Cobb built and operated a forge at Greenville (Marcella) called the Durham Forge. There is

archeological evidence of this forge under and in the vicinity of the berm at the south end of Durham Pond. It is likely that the Durham Pond dam and berm were built to supply water to the Durham Forge which used water power to form the pig iron into useful objects. Durham Pond and forge are shown on an 1833 Morris Co. map. Cobb Furnace, now known as the Splitrock Furnace is located downstream from Durham Pond. Durham Road itself led to the Splitrock Pond mine which may now be underwater. The mine and furnace were owned by Ebenezer's cousin, Colonel Lemuel Cobb, who owned most of the property, over 3,000 acres, extending from Hibernia to Newfoundland. Based on Morris County atlas maps, Durham Pond's stone dam was built sometime between 1868 and 1886.

Existing maps show islands at different locations. This is a result of several floating islands of marsh plants which would periodically change their locations!

### **The Early Scouts**

**The first Scout camping occurred at Durham Pond in 1916.** A troop from Montclair came in to camp for several weeks and set up camp at the south end of the pond near the dam. As was the practice in the earliest days of Scout camping the Montclair troop brought all their own equipment, supplies, and food. Scouts now call this "outpost camping." They remarked about the cold spring water feeding the lake and the sound of the cow bells on Durham Road.

Because of a mix-up with the arrangements to use the property they were forced to leave after about a week. They moved camp to another lake, Earle's Pond, location unknown at this time.

By 1923 the Boy Scouts of the Elizabeth Area Council had use of a large log cabin and fields located in Watchung Reservation, which was a part of the Union County park system. In exchange the scouts policed the reservation. The log cabin was used as a dining hall. Later, when their own camps in north Jersey were established, the "Boy Scout Camping Area" continued to be used for short-term weekend camping.

In the 1930's the Union Council Boy Scouts used a part of another council's camp, Ken-Etiwa-Pec, in Blairstown for much of their camping. They also camped at Camp Burton-at-Allaire in Monmouth and at Camp Mohican. The Union Council scouts provided their own staff, program and patches.

## **Camp Winnebago Is Born**

In 1940 the council started negotiations on a large tract of land in Marcella. The land was donated by Mr. and Mrs. Rodney Williams of Marlboro, MA. The huge property was nearly three square miles and much of it was later sold or transferred to create Camp Marcella, Camp Lewis, part of Farney State Park, and the north end of Splitrock Reservoir. The north half of what is now Splitrock was dry forest and swamp land until the new dam was built in 1948. Hiking and canoeing rights were retained for the north end of Splitrock Pond.

In the summer of 1941 the first troop camping occurred. Each campsite had a stove, an icebox, a latrine, and running water from a driven well. **The first week of camp saw only one troop, Troop 23 from Elizabeth.** The five campsites could handle up to 150 scouts and by the third week camp was full. Campers slept in tents on platforms with cots and mattresses filled with straw. Scouts paid \$7.50 for the week and cooked their own food which was supplied.

The camp was simply known as the Union Council camp in Marcella. Few of the felt patches and other camp memorabilia survive.

## **The South End of Camp Develops First**

The first section of camp to be developed was at the south end. Durham Road was the only entrance into camp.

A dining hall, now called Baden Powell Lodge, was constructed as was a waterfront at the point of land now known as the Searing Site. The Field Sports ranges were located on the trail leading down below the dam. Two small cabins soon served the camp director and assistant. These were the Kreiter and Quartermaster cabins. The Garrity cabin, known for many years as the Quartermaster cabin, was recently renovated by the Flintlocks and dedicated to Henry "Hank" Garrity who lived here with his family while Camp Director from 1952 to 1959. The South End fields were used for scouting events and troop camping.

## **The North End of Camp Is Developed**

In 1948 the road into the north end of camp was opened and most of the camp was operating at this end. The present dining hall was in use by this time and the Health Lodge was then what is now the Kiwanis Cabin. The trading post and headquarters was in the current Winter Lodge. A coal fired shower house was located just north of the Nature Lodge. A Camp Ranger's residence was built. The original chapel areas were near the Cherokee site. The rifle and archery ranges were still located below the dam on the trail to Splitrock Reservoir and the aquatics area at the south end. It is related that the lake was drained to kill the weeds in 1949 and that army flame-throwers were used to kill them. In 1963 a small bank building from Kenilworth was moved to camp and became the camp's summer administration building.

In 1967 the Hayden Foundation donated \$150,000 to dredge and deepen the lake which was becoming choked with weeds and less useful for swimming and boating. A dike was constructed across the marshy area at the north end of the lake and the dredge spoils placed behind it. The waterfront was then moved to its present location beneath the present dining hall and the rifle and archery ranges moved to their present locations.

### **Winnebago Becomes Winnebago**

In 1950 the **Union Council Camp at Marcella** was re-named **Camp Winnebago**. The Winnebago's are a tribe of native Americans. The first "Camp Winnebago" patch was a red felt arrowhead issued in 1951. Most new troop campsites were given native American tribal names except Witauchsundin which was the O.A. Lodge name.

### **Camp Winnebago Becomes Winnebago Scout Reservation**

When did Camp Winnebago become Winnebago Scout Reservation?  
By 1963 two wilderness camping sites were established on the east side of Durham Pond, Kit Carson and Jim Bowie. Troops could opt to camp there during their week at summer camp.

In 1968 a Frontier Camp for wilderness camping was opened on the east side of Durham Pond. Before the well was operating water was supplied by a two inch floating line from across the lake. The purpose of this site was

to promote week long summer troop camping in the old Scouting tradition of troop cooking.

Five wilderness troop sites were established along the Red Trail which starts near Kit Carson and a quartermaster cabin was built. The Red Trail now leads to the north end of Splitrock Pond and to Indian Cliffs, a popular day hike from Winnebago. The north end of camp was termed "Indian Village" and the new troop sites "Frontier Camp." Because of the multi-camp nature the term scout reservation was now used.

Soon after the merger of Union and Watchung Councils the south end of camp was called Watchung Camp and some troop camping took place on Craig and Hellen fields.

By 1980 the present parking lot was created and the old one converted to the main activity field. This was a safety improvement which separated campers from moving vehicles.

### **Camp Improvements**

Prior to the 1980 merger of councils many camp improvements were made by the **Witauchsundin Order of the Arrow Lodge** and by the **Evergreen K**, a group of adult volunteers. Evergreen K built what is currently Building A, HQ. After 1980 Evergreen K merged with the Watchung group of volunteers called the **Flintlocks**. The Flintlocks still meet and work most weeks at camp. Major recent projects include renovation of the old south end dining hall into the B.P. Lodge and construction of several troop site pavilion shelters. Another group of volunteers, **Flint and Steel**, also contribute to camp improvements. Each year hundreds of youth and adults volunteers converge on Winnebago on **Beaver Day** to prepare the camp for the summer season.

### **Camp Winnebago Anniversaries**

On August 3, 1991, Winnebago celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a re-union of staff, campers, and scouters. A patch, pin, and anniversary booklet were issued. In July 2001, a similar event celebrated the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary with camp tours, a dinner, and a campfire. Staff tenure was recognized at the campfire and Richard Mager was found to have been on staff for 41 years. The next closest was George Reinhard with 17 years. Both were on staff for the 2001 camping season. A 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary took place in 2007.

## **Scouter's Trail**

After the UC-WC merger Camp Watchung was closed. A Scouters' Trail was established off the main activity field where the dedication plaques were given a permanent home and past contributions to our scout camps could be recognized.

## **Witauchsundin Lodge #431**

Witauchsundin Order of the Arrow Lodge #431 was founded in 1950 .The first brothers were inducted in camp by OA members of Allemakewink Lodge #54 from Morris-Sussex Council. Joseph Quick completed earning his Vigil Honor by organizing and participating in the ceremony. Joe Quick later became a professional scouter with Union Council and a Winnebago camp director for four seasons.

The original patch design was based on the camp logo of acorn and oak leaf with the comet and stars of the Northern District . Dedicated to cheerful service to fellow man and to camp promotion the lodge made many camp improvements including continued maintenance of the corduroy trail and financing the Witauchsundin troop site. The lodge merged with Miquin #68 when Union and Watchung councils merged. Witauchsundin translates from Lenape to mean” **Fellowship one to the other.**”

## **Green Bar Bill's Visit**

In 1962 William Hillcourt, GBB, spent a week at Winnebago. GBB was author of many editions of the BSA Handbook , Field Book, and numerous articles in Boy's Life. He was invited by Joe Quick, then camp director and a personal friend of GBB. GGB spent the week taking hundreds of photos of scouts in action including “caveman cooking” at the south end fields. He accepted an invitation to the Troop 8, Elizabeth, campfire and was impressed by the boy-run event. Doc Taub was T-8 SM at the time.

## **The Legend of the Council Ring**

In 1951 camp staffers Jess Weiler and Andy DeMar wrote an epic story based on native Americans. The story was then put to verse by Andy DeMar and used as a closing campfire theme at summer camp. This epic poem speaks of brotherhood, of individual courage in the face of adversity, and of

the triumph of right over wrong. The epic poem soon became known as the Legend of Winnebago. The legend has now awed campers at Winnebago campfires for over fifty years, with a theatrical quality production which often included burning teepees. . The legend is now part of the Winnebago Night Watch which scouters are encouraged to use on weekend camping trips to Winnebago.

### **Summer Camp Staffs**

Hundreds of summer camp staffers have passed through Winnebago passing on the “ **Spirit of Winnebago**” to thousands of campers. Phrases like “Hi Scout!”, “Its for the boy!”, “...level it”, and “best darn camp in the universe” became ingrained in hundreds. The old timers will always remember Hank Garrity’s red felt hat at campfires, Rich Mager’s Hawaiian shirt, and Wink Dousa’s popularity in the handicraft lodge.

In 1960 Charlie Casey was camp ranger and he supervised the Winnebago Camp “**Rangers**” who were the inspiration of Joe Quick. The Rangers were junior staff who did maintenance in the mornings and worked in program areas in the afternoon. The Rangers continued on for several years supervised by Ken Parker who became Camp Ranger in 1963.

### **Summer Camp Directors**

#### **Camp Directors**

#### **Ed Lega.....?-1951**

Hank Garrity.....1952-1959

Joe Quick.....1960-1962

Bill Bolan.....1963

Hurd Hastings.....1964-1966

Stan Mikus.....1967-1969

Jack Griffiths.....1970-1974

\*no summer camp in 1975

Lloyd Goebel.....1976

John Phaller.....1977

Saul Gilbert.....1978-1979

Dan Bernier.....1980-1983

Joel Harbugger....1984

Al Collins.....1985

Dan O'Brian.....1986-1988  
Steve Moore.....1989  
Vincent. Redde...1990  
Pete Migilorini....1991-1996  
Eric Strand.....1997  
Mary Tomchuk....1998-1999  
Todd Lamison.....2000  
Kitty Reinhard.....2001-2007

**Thanks !**

Thanks to the many who have and continue to contribute information and memories to our collection of Camp Winnebago history. These include Rich Mager, Rich Milewski, George Reinhard, Randall Holden, Ron Jaremcak , Phil Berkebile ,Ken Parker, Alan MacDonald and Jeff Huppert. Jeff Huppert collects and organizes information. A multi-frame display of Winnebago history and memorabilia is available for exhibition. Contact him at [jeffhup@optonline.net](mailto:jeffhup@optonline.net).