

Leaders train year-round at Blue Springs Reserve

As Blue Springs Scout Reserve celebrates its 40th year of operation this year it does so under unique circumstances. The fact that the reserve has almost completely been operated for that length of time by volunteers.

"Volunteer work has made Blue Springs what it is today," said Art Jackson, Director of Program and Adult Training for the Boy Scouts of Canada. "Seven thousand man-hours were put into the Training Lodge by volunteers and at least 75 per cent of the work being done on the Staff House and Equipment and Garbage Shed is voluntary."

"By the way," he added, "You have a very active volunteer committee in Acton and Georgetown which, through their participation, has helped shape Blue Springs."

Blue Springs was purchased by The Ontario Provincial Council in January 1937. The property comprised about 100 acres.

"Yes, we've got a good 100 acres of woods here," said Don Ferguson, a member of the Provincial Field Executive. "I don't think more than 30 percent of it has been cleared. We want to leave it as natural as possible. Scouting is moving towards the idea of environmental protection."

Previous to 1937, Ontario Gilwell courses, otherwise known as Adult Leadership Training Courses, were held at Ebor Park, near Brantford. Ebor Park was on the back end of a farm which was owned by a Mr. Fred Luck. This property had been offered for sale but the price was too high as far as using it for Scout purposes was concerned.

At this time the Provincial Council was holding a sum of money donated by the family of Col. Leonard to be used for Scouting in Ontario.

The family of Mr. Fred J. Mann, who is deceased and was a former member of the Ontario Provincial Council, decided they would like to make a donation toward Ontario Scouting in memory of their father. The purchase of a campsite to be used for training purposes was discussed with both families and both agreed this would be an excellent idea.

A committee was formed to look over available sites but didn't come across any immediately that met with its approval. However, in the fall of 1936 they placed an advertisement in a number of Ontario newspapers and then they visited a few of the sites that were available.

Blue Springs was the choice and on January 18th, 1937 the committee purchased the property from Mr. Wm. A. Murray.

The property was a Crown grant to Mrs. Elisabeth Stuart on September 18, 1879 on receipt of a payment of fifty dollars. The Provincial Council is the eighth owner of this property which has been known as Blue Springs since the original grant.

Mr. Murray sold the rail-

way rights to the Toronto Suburban Railway October 3, 1912 to operate an electric railway which passed through the property. The railway was operated from Toronto to Guelph. This railway carried a number of groups to various spots along the route which were operated on picnic grounds, Blue Springs being one of them. This railway was abandoned in 1935 and the right of way through the property turned back to Mr. Murray on November 29, 1935.

The blockhouse and gate was designed after the type built by early British settlers in Canada and was built by the Ontario Department of Lands and Forests under supervision of Dr. A. H. Richardson.

Dr. Richardson was a member of the Ontario Provincial Council and Chairman of the Blue Springs Camp Committee.

The cairn located inside the main gate is made from a stone taken from the centre of the roadway almost directly in front of where it stands at present. A neighbor, Mr. Fred Watson, faced the stone and carved the lettering. He was also responsible for building the fireplace in the Kekedowigamig.

When the property was purchased there were two buildings on it, one house called Murray Lodge, the second called the Pavilion. Murray Lodge common room was previously three rooms and the partitions were taken down in order to make a common room.

The walls were then covered with knotty pine and wallboard on the ceiling. The kitchen was left almost as purchased with the exception that a sink was added with a work table beside it. The bedroom was an addition to the building. The two bookshelves have many Scouting publications.

The springs from whence the property gets its name is the source of drinking water. The water, which has a tinge of blue due to certain chemicals in the ground, has always received an 'A' grading and never rises above 45 degrees.

The F. C. Irwin Memorial Chapel is in memory of the late Mr. Irwin who was Executive Commissioner for the province of Ontario from October 1920 until the time of his death, December 9, 1954.

Gilwell courses over a period of years contributed toward a fund to build an outdoor chapel. This money, along with a sum collected by the Gilwell Reunion Committee and an amount contributed by the Provincial Council, which the Gilwell Committee hope to repay in due time, was used to pay for the building of the chapel.

The chapel grounds were dedicated at a Gilwell Reunion in September 1954 and the chapel was dedicated in September 1956 at the Gilwell Reunion.

The pavilion, which was used as a picnic shelter before the property was purchased, is now used to conduct "yarns" on courses.



PUTTING UP THE NEW ENTRANCE sign are Peter Godwin, a summer student from Arva who attends Humber College and Doug MacDonald a summer student from Strathroy who attends the University of Western Ontario.



STYLED SIMILAR TO OLD FORT YORK is the entrance to Blue Springs Scout Reserve on the sixth line of Nassagaweya, west of Acton. The entrance was built shortly after the reserve was bought in 1937. It is the official provincial training ground for Scout leaders.

wooden cross, was made of wood taken from Gilwell Park where the original Adult Leadership Training courses are, and used in the English gateway at the American Jamboree at Valley Forge in 1930.

An additional 22 feet was added to the building in 1958. Ten feet was used for additional space in the main room. The balance was divided into two rooms on the one side, one used as an office for the course staff and the second as an infirmary. The opposite side was left as one room to be used as a library.

Friends of Col. Locke donated money for the furnishing of this room. Col. Locke was Provincial Commissioner in Ontario from 1938 to 1940. The room is known as the Col. Locke Memorial Library.

Electricity and propane gas for cooking were introduced to Blue Springs in 1956. This included the installation of an electric pressure water system.

The storage shed was built in 1956. All equipment was stored here when not in use.

Permanent latrines were built on all Patrol sites in 1957.

Two permanent bases for Patrol floor boards were built in 1958. These were used by five courses and proved satisfactory. Two more were added in 1959.

Installation of a gas hot water heater in the bathroom and a gas space heater in the kitchen of Kekedowigamig took place in 1958.

Due to the ever increasing problem of disposing garbage a gas incinerator was installed in 1959. This was located behind the bathroom. Garbage is now handled through a collection agency. An abutment hut was completed on the women's side of the campsite in 1960.

The Gilwell Reunion Committee paid for the insulation and paneling for the Lister Hut in 1969, thus modernizing the oldest training building on the property.

In 1970 the training lodge was built.

"We hope the equipment shed, garbage shed and the staff house will be completed by late September or early October," Jackson said. "The Staff House will have 12 beds in two apartments and the new equipment shed should eliminate any problems created by flammable products we have been storing in the training lodge."

"The reserve is open all year round," commented Ferguson. "This is the case because the training programs take place all year round."

Close to 1500 people went through the training courses provided by the Boy Scouts of Canada last year at Blue Springs, with over 4,500 people spending some time at the reserve altogether.

Those 4,500 people include Boy Scouts of Canada, Ontario districts, Halton Hills Park and Recreation, Humber College, the Salvation Army, several Ontario high schools, the National Orienteering Association and many individual societies wishing to learn how to camp.

if his troop could camp on his farm. It became a regular camping spot for Acton scouts for many years afterward.

"Now the property is almost completely given over to the training of leaders. Local people are still active in the servicing of the camp and volunteers involved in the scouting in Acton are presently helping construct a new building, under the leadership of Frank Goulding.

Every September, graduates of the Gilwell course assemble for their annual reunion at Blue Springs from as far away as Texas. They come from all over Canada and the United States to learn the course and some have come from as far away as Africa and the West Indies.

"This place has the best facilities," said Ferguson. "After all, you want your new leaders to be qualified enough to handle today's Boy Scouts and Cubs."

"Incidentally, the first-ever Beaver Adult Training course will be taking place later this month," he added.

Acton has had a close relationship to Blue Springs for many years. It was about 65 years ago that scoutmaster Fred Coles asked Mr. Murray

the main building was used on Scout Gilwell courses for campfire programs during inclement weather and on Akela courses for all meals.

The name is of Algonquin origin and means "Place of council meeting". The centre stone in the fireplace came from the fireplace at Ebor Park.

The wagon wheel is of early Canadian origin and was found on a site which is used by the Seed Collection Branch of the Ontario Lands and Forests at Angus, near Barrie.

The picture of Lord Baden Powell, founder of the Boy Scout movement was painted by a Hamilton Scouter during a Rover Leaders Course a few years ago.

The shell on the mantel was one of the shells fired in the defence of Mafeking. The

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