

Blue Springs Scout Reserve benefits Scouters and boys

By Jennifer Howe
Nearby Blue Springs Scout Reserve is the major adult training centre for the province. It is designed for training Scouting leaders and not as a campsite for Scouting boys. However, it is these boys—Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, Venturers and Rovers — which justify its existence.

"Without the boys there would be no need for Blue Springs," said Provincial field executive Bob Carlaw.

This well known scout reserve is located in the former Township of Nassagaweya, three miles west of Acton.

September 17 will mark 100 years since the 100 acres of rocky, unfertile land was bought from the Crown by a Mrs. Elizabeth Stuart. After the deed was drawn up in 1879, Blue Springs saw six other owners, some for less than one year, before purchased by the Ontario Provincial Council for Scouting in January, 1937.

Bob Carlaw, the Provincial Field executive, is said to know the ins and outs of Blue Springs and he literally lives there. A stone house built on the property for the caretaker has been the Carlaw's home for the past year. Alex Kingsbury, the man who keeps Blue Springs in shape, has worked as the custodian for 16 years. Mr. Carlaw said he has a home in Rockwood and commutes to work.

Mr. Carlaw said the reserve is busy all year round with training for leaders from across the provinces with the exception of one weekend in September. The traditional Gilwell reunion attracts Gilwell Scouters, often from around the world, for this weekend training of fun and meeting old friends.

The Gilwell wood badge training course is operated in three parts. Named after the adult training centre in England, Gilwell Park, leaders complete the first level of their Gilwell at a weekend district level training. The second part is offered by the Provincial level of Scouting, usually at Blue Springs, and the third completed under the direction of the local district commissioner. The third part involved three months of working back with the leaders own group practising what they learned during the two training sessions held previously.

Gilwell Scouters can be recognized by the symbolic neckerchief and beads.

Mr. Carlaw described the training at Blue Springs as unique and involved. "Leaders come here, to Blue Springs, live and work together trying to reach a common goal. They share their ideas. This is probably the best way to learn... from each other," he said.

Blue Springs was sold to Boy Scouts by William A. Murray, who owned the property from 1912 until 1937. When he first bought the property Mr. Murray sold railway

Comment sought on bylaw

The region is seeking comment from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and the Halton Region Conservation Authority on a proposed tree conservation by-law.

The new by-law would replace the current tree which has been found to contain what region planning director Ed Cumming, calls, "a number of major problems."

Chief of these problems is a lack of protection for large trees considered necessary to environmentally sensitive areas.

In addition, the current by-law protects only those species listed and does not protect rare or regionally significant species such as the sweet chestnut and walnut.

When the comments come back, staff will advise council on needed amendments.

If and when the bylaw goes into force, Mr. Cumming said the need for a special by-law enforcement officer should be considered

rights to the Toronto Suburban Railway, the electric railway which operated from Toronto to Guelph. It carried passengers, often stopping at the well-known, Stop 90, Blue Springs, for a picnic lunch before continuing.

The railway was abandoned in 1935 and the right of way through the property was turned back to Mr. Murray. The rail bed is still discernible.

As with much of the scouting program there is a story behind the buildings and monuments at Blue Springs.

The blockhouse and gate was designed after those built by the early British settlers in Canada. The replica at Blue Springs was built by the Ontario Department of Lands and Forests under the supervision of Dr. A.H. Richardson, 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 now. The stone was faced and carved by a Blue

Springs neighbor, Fred Watson.

Two buildings, the Murray home and pavilion, were already on the land when it was purchased.

The Murray's home, now known as Murray's Lodge is a type of museum for the movement. The pavilion which was used as a picnic

shelter, is now used to conduct sessions during the courses. The shelter roof is decorated with Indian designs each depicting a part of everyday life. The designs have been put on by Scouters.

Amidst the trees overlooking the areas namesake, the Blue Springs pond, sits the chapel. The

chapel is in the memory of the late F.C. Irwin, executive commissioner for the province of Ontario from 1920 until he died in 1964. Gilwell courses throughout the years contributed towards a fund to build the outdoor chapel. This money, along with contributions from the Gilwell Reunion com-

mittee and from the Provincial council was used to construct the chapel.

The many buildings at Blue Springs all seem to have a story behind them. One theme which runs throughout Blue Springs is one of hard work. Mr. Carlaw said the work at Blue Springs both minor and major is volunteer. "Work parties from all over the province come down for a weekend to help out," he said.

The newest buildings at Blue Springs are a set of apartments for course instructors. "The work of the instructors is also volunteer. They take time away from their families to share with leaders the skills of dealing with Scouting boys," he said.

Course staff can use the apartments for meetings and for accommodations during the inside training.

Mr. Carlaw explained the money for the apartments once again reflects a group effort. The building has been paid for partly with Trees for Canada money. The largest portion of the money earned goes to the group or district, 15 per cent is used by the Province and 15 per cent for the National Brotherhood fund. It is the provincial portion which helps to

pay for facilities such as Blue Springs and the Scouting Wilderness Canoe base at Engihart, Ontario.

The Blue Clay springs nestled in the trees by the chapel never freezes over, according to Carlaw. The springs supplies drinking water for the reserve and stays

at a constant 42 degrees.

Mr. Carlaw stressed the basic lesson taught at the training centre is teaching adults to provide the boys with the opportunity to help themselves.

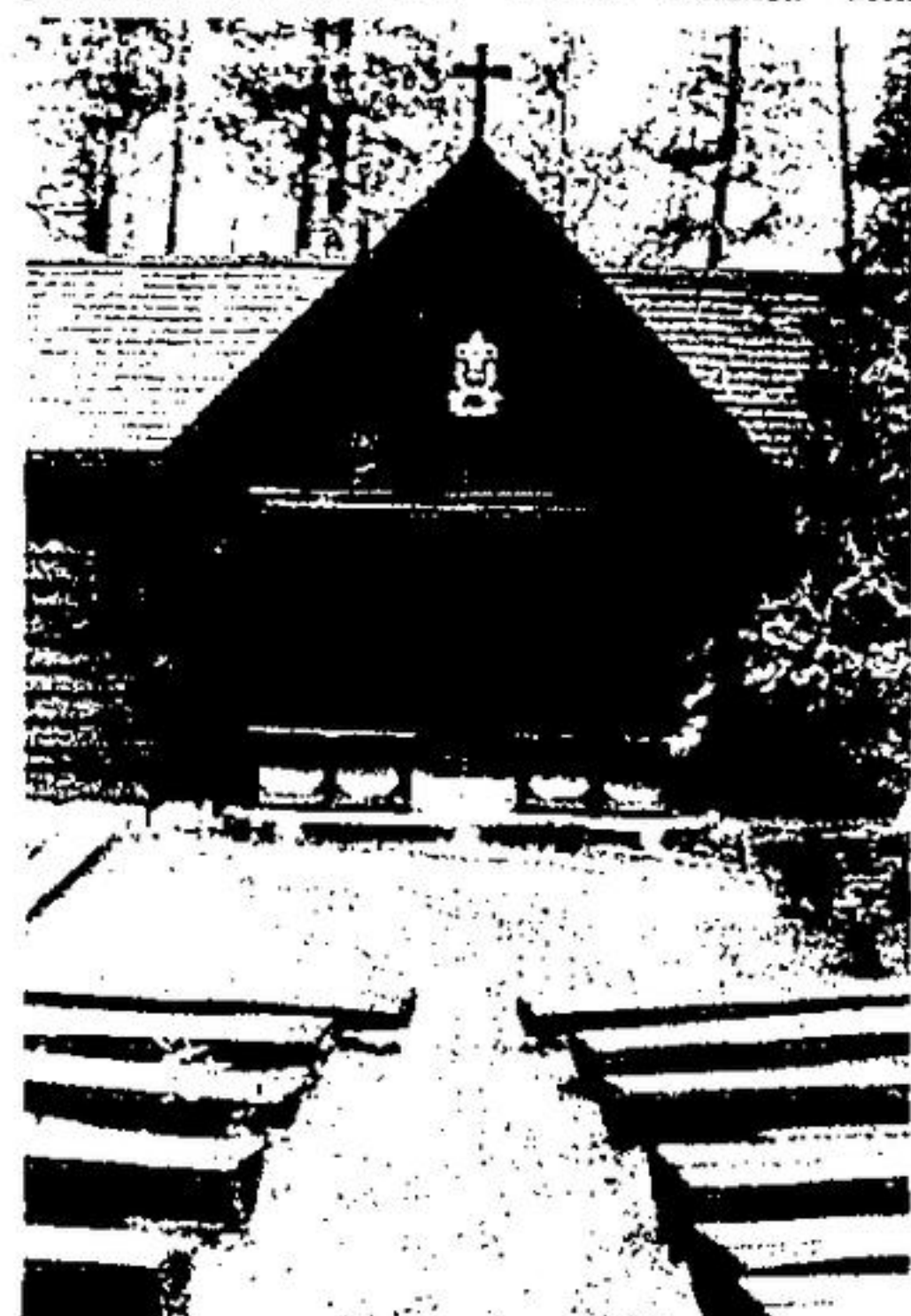
The vigor of the scouting movement is testimony to the success of that program.

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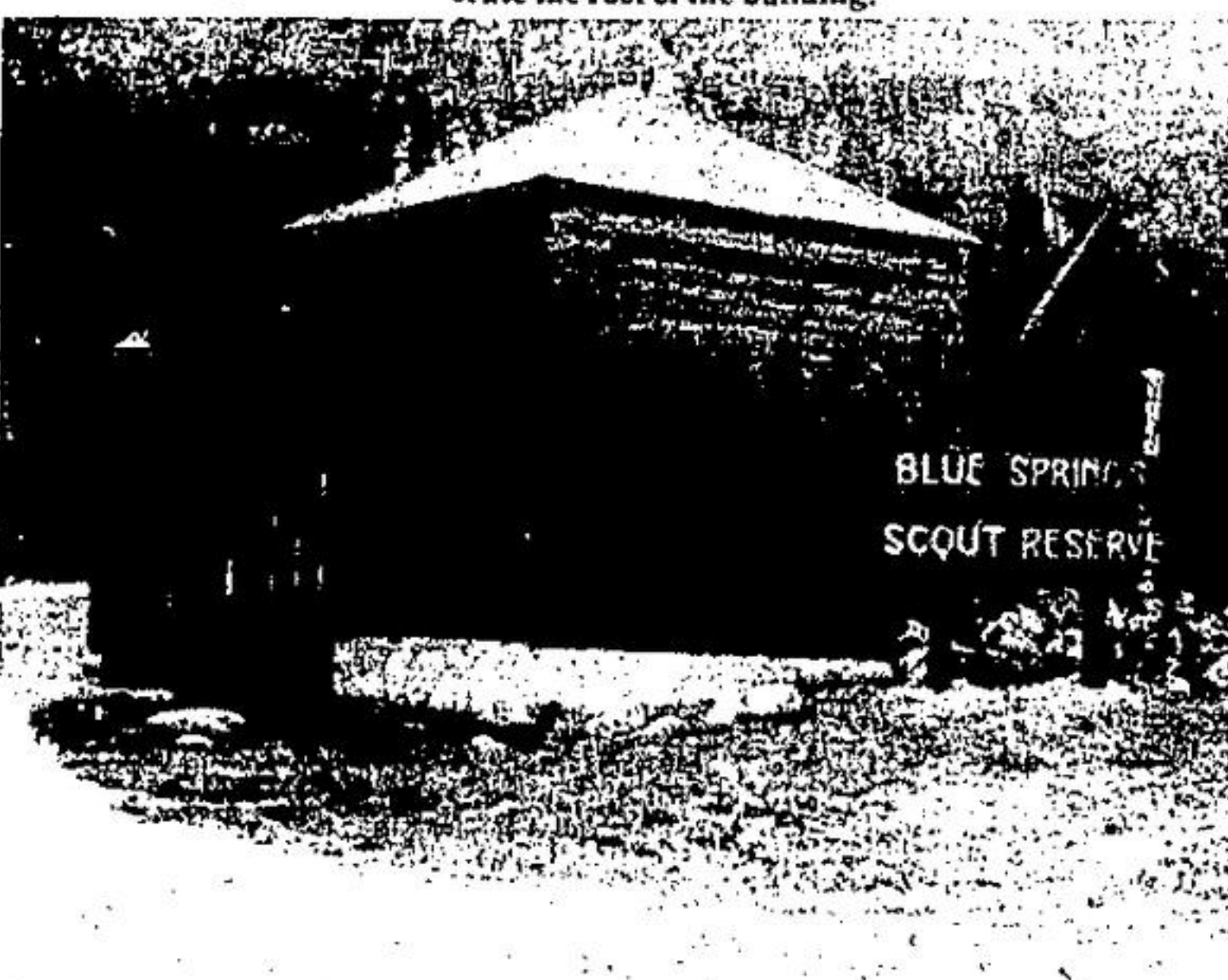
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The pavilion at Blue Springs was once used as a picnic shelter and was often visited by passengers on the Toronto Suburban Railways who would stop to picnic at popular Stop 90. The electric railway ran through the property before it was purchased by the Scouts. The pavilion is now used for outdoor training sessions. Drawings imitating Indian art decorate the roof of the building.



The Chapel at Blue Springs sits back from the excitement of the reserve in a tranquil, tree setting on the edge of the Blue Springs from which the property is named. Services for those training at the centre are held in this outdoor setting.



Greeting visitors to Blue Springs in the block house and gate designed after those built by early British settlers. The 100 acre Scout reserve is used for provincial Scouter training and is busy all year with trainings for members across the province.

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