

Camp Wilderness History Project

<https://nlcbsa.org/history/>

The Scouting story begins at Camp Wilderness... 1945-1949

Questions we have - do you know anything?

- What else do you know?
- Did we miss anything?
- What else happened this decade?
- Was any of our information incorrect?
- Do you have any photos?
- Do you have any additional stories?

40's TimeLine for Camp Wilderness

- Location located to establish a camp to replace Camp Shawondasee
- Summer 1945 older Scouts from Shawondasse came to Wilderness to camp along where the waterfront is currently to check out and clear campsites. They were brought in by boat with enough supplies for the week. One of the week's food ran low and they captured a raccoon to supplement their food. Overall agreement was that it tasted terrible.
- Camp was purchased December 24, 1945
- Construction of the Black Building -
- Construction of the Dining Hall -
- Camp Dedication held in 1949 - with the attendance of the ND and MN Governors
- Camp Alma Mater created by Edgar Olson
- Main camp road switched from original road
- Construction of the Trading Post/Quartermaster Shop -
- Originals plan for 4 sub camps under the Wilderness Camps name (name of sub camps)
- Use of outpost areas



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The Scouting Story at Camp Wilderness Begins

1941 the [Red River Valley Council](#) launched an expansion program to increase the number of Scouts in the program. Their current [Camp Shawondasse](#) on Long Lake by Detroit Lakes quickly became too small to handle the numbers of Scouts where the attendance was 1100 campers in 1944 with camp stretching 11 weeks during the summer.

[Dr. Norman Baker](#) from Fergus Falls was chosen by the Council Board as Chairman to locate the most advantageous site for the camp. In August of 1945 at Camp Shawondasee (Detroit Lakes) A five year program was proposed to develop a new camp. In the first 12 months they visited 30 towns and raised \$75,000 to cover the estimated initial cost. Eventually 1,100 contributors or “investors in “happiness” as they were called with donations starting at \$10 to \$7500. An additional \$50,000 is expected to be raised through friends of Scouting who wish to share in the satisfaction of doing something worthwhile and to make the Wilderness Camp the great living memorial for character building of our youth.

One summer while on vacation [Herman Stern](#) (Valley City) with his family staying at the [Isle O'Dreams Resort](#) when he looked across Bad Axe Lake and wondered if the woods across the lake would make the perfect camp. A space large enough to expand into the future and wilderness enough to challenge the Scouts with their adventures.

Soon after Herman Stern and his son Edward were bouncy up and down in their new car over the trails that led up to present



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day Camp Wilderness. Nearly destroying the car's suspension as they determined that indeed this spot would be perfect. On Christmas Eve of 1945 the Red River Valley Council signed the agreement for the purchase from the Red River Lumber Company in Saint Paul to purchase 428 acres for \$4,311. In June 1946 an additional 1,706 acres were purchased from Hubbard County for delinquent taxes for \$1,075, making the total cost of 2134 acres \$5,386.

In 1945 [John Lindblom](#), a forester from Parkers Prairie was commissioned to survey the land.

survey notes - visit <https://nlcbasa.org/history/>

After two more purchases the camp was increased to a total of 2400 acres for about \$7500. During the summer of 1945 older Scouts from Showondasse were trucked up to camp to start the process of making it a camp. Starting on the waterfront they made camp and began hacking the undergrowth making trails and campsites.

By 1946 led by Virgil Reed as the Camp Director of the newly created "Wilderness Camp" Scouts began the adventure where the road ends.

A large dedication of the camp was held in 1949 showcasing the newly built dining hall and administration building inviting the Governors of North Dakota and Minnesota.

1949 Dedication of Camp - ND Governor Fred G. Anndahl and MN Governor Luther W. Youngdahl along with Herman Stern (Valley City, ND), Dr. Norman Baker (Fergus Falls, MN), Region 10 Executive Henry Schneider, and unknown person.



front

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Boy Scout Camp
Notes from Andy Kietzman
Director of Camp Wilderness

Before the land was owned by the Northern Lights Council of the Boy Scouts of America, it was owned a number of persons. The names on the 1916 plat book show that most of the land was owned by T.B. Walker, Walker & Akeley, and Walker and Joyce. Walker and Akeley were lumber barons.

After clear cutting the area it was opened to settlement. There is evidence that log cabins were built. There is an old stone cellar, with fine workmanship, built by Alfred Linden on the NW corner of the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of the SE quarter section. It is near a pond. Some other names that appear on the plat book are Sever Lystrom, Seavert L. Frothe, Anders Mattson, Henry Baker, and August Lof. The Lofs set up a sawmill which was closed in 1925.

In 1949 the Northern Light Council of the Boy Scouts of America bought the land to use as a camp. The land includes part of Bad Axe land and two other smaller lakes. The camp is currently run as a wilderness camping experience. It has a number of camping areas, Is also includes a manager's home, a dinning hall, a main lodge, a swimming beach, and an archery range, storage and maintenance buildings and the manager's office.

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The Association of the Northern Lights Camps has established this trail with the hopes for a deeper understanding of the heritage and legacy of Camp Wilderness and the Northern Lights Council.

We would appreciate any feedback that you may have from the accuracy of the information to any additional information.

[Update/Correct the History Project or Trail](#)

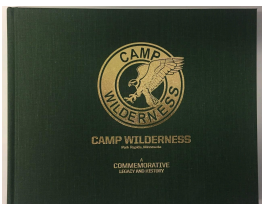
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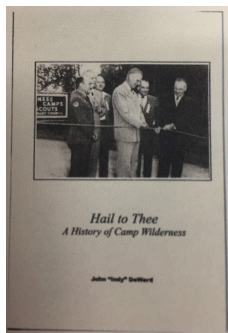
Patch are available for purchase \$15 in the Camp Trading Post, at the Center for Scouting in Fargo, or by contacting the Association at northernlightsalumni@gmail.com

Proceeds going to the History Center to help with operating cost & expanding our collection



The Coffee Table Keepsake book w/pictures \$10 available at the Camp Trading Post or Fargo's Center for Scouting

and



**There's a limited number of
"Hail to Thee - A History of Camp Wilderness"
\$20 (plus \$5 mailing) available at the Center for Scouting in Fargo
or by contacting the [Association](#)**

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