

From One Camp to Three: 1952-59

By Peter Collinge

The Otetiana Council had managed, with herculean efforts, to fund and build "Camp A" (later called Pioneer) in the short 9-month window from September, 1951, to June, 1952. But that wasn't enough: some troops had been turned away for 1952, and promises were made for a second camp to be ready by 1953. Fortunately, that would be less of a scramble, since work on Camp B (Mountaineer) and its challenging road was already underway before Camp A opened. And there would finally be time for some needed improvements such as a suitable home for Property Superintendent Harley Burgdorf's family, who had been staying in the old Park House (near the current Trek Office).

Building a Second Camp

Burgdorf stayed busy during the summer of 1952. The basic road to "Manhattan" (the hotel-era name for the Camp B area) was finished on July 12. Crews began logging to open up areas in Camp B, with some of the logs becoming lumber for construction. Burgdorf was also coordinating a lot of planning that summer, for Camp B and for the new home for his family plus a maintenance building. He met with contractors Chet & Bill Johnson, with Scout Executive Fred Wellington, and with others involved. On August 12 the Johnsons and Russ Woods gave a price of \$8500 for the new house, plus \$2100 for plumbing & heating and \$425 for wiring & fixtures. By August 15, Fred Wellington had authorized going ahead with that construction and the new maintenance/service building. A few days later Burgdorf visited Rochester for a meeting with the Camping and Development Committee, where the plans were finalized, including the use of board and batten siding on all buildings.

Meanwhile, summer camp was happening, and presumably Burgdorf's team also supported the camp's needs in their spare time. In a positive sign for future relations with the locals, many staff members participated in the Childwold Presbyterian Church's annual dinner on August 13, starting a long-standing tradition of cooperation on that dinner. And as summer camp wound down, Camp Director Bob "Parky" Parkinson visited Camp B on August 20 with Burgdorf to check on the field and building layouts. The "bulldozer man" got the road done into the dining hall site a few days later.

By late August, the sites for the house and service building were cleared, and the house foundation was underway. The service building was just one step behind. The house was enclosed by September 16; none too soon, since there had been a near-frost in late August and a heavy frost September 8. By mid-October the house chimney and fireplace were finished (using stones from Potsdam) and the foundation had been started for the Camp B dining hall. By the end of October, phone, electric and water lines had been installed into the house. Meanwhile, a foundation was poured (in snow) to support the old hotel casino that was in use in Camp A as a lodge, and a new roof was installed on it.

By November, heat was on in the new house. Mike Sabin was wiring the service building (garage & shop). The logging horse team was staying in the barn by the Park House, ready to work near Long Pond, and 5000 board feet of 2x4s and 2x6s had been delivered to Camp B. By year-end the foundations were in for all Camp B buildings, at a price of \$680 for the showerhouse and \$18/pier elsewhere. The hotel chimney remnant was torn down. A heater and other equipment were moved into the new shop, and the house got some final touches like storm windows. On December 17 the Burgdorf family finally moved into their new home, no doubt glad to leave the old Park House.

Over the winter, work continued on the Camp B buildings, and the campsites were laid out so that the loggers could clear them. Sites were selected for the craft and nature lodges. Men worked building wooden cots, tent platforms, tables, latrines, and washracks. The path for the power line to Camp B was chosen and cleared. The old shop and barn by the Park House were cleaned out and torn down. All of this was done despite snow that got so heavy that the men shoveled the roofs of some of the buildings, including 3.5 feet of snow from the roof of the Camp A dining hall on January 3.

By March, lots of tasks were under way, and Burgdorf was adding extra workers. Loggers were dumping logs into the lake, which were then boomed to a haul-out area on the other side of the lake. Work on tearing down old buildings and finishing new ones continued. The Camp B dining hall had been enclosed, and pine paneling was being installed. Into April the latrines and tent platforms were being set in Camp B, despite occasional wet snow (12" on April 21), and the pump house was started. At least 22 beavers had been trapped over the winter at Boottree, Catamount, Horseshoe Ponds, and at the "old wine cellar" (later the Vingo outpost near Eagle Island); 20 were sold for \$223, but two were frozen and taken to Jay to be mounted. Also in April, the council announced that Camp A would be called Pioneer, and Camp B would be Mountaineer. The Pioneer name echoed the former Rochester Council's Camp Pioneer, on Seneca Lake from 1927-38.

As things warmed up in May, work began on new water lines for Mountaineer, and redoing Pioneer's lines. On May 16, the old Park House and its rear shop were burned (intentionally!). During the next week, power poles and transformers were set and lines strung to Mountaineer, and the kitchen equipment arrived by tractor trailer. There was a setback May 26 when the log boom broke and half of the logs scattered around the lake. Multiple men worked for days with a power boat and rowboats to gather them all back up and haul them out, which took until June 15.

In June, crews continuing work on water lines at both camps, despite the thick clouds of black flies. (Also, at the Burgdorf house, they reset and drove the well pipe deeper.) Many small tasks remained: new visitor latrines, building the Mountaineer waterfront tower, grading the beach, building and installing docks & piers, finishing the Mountaineer wiring. A big help was the first Beaver Weekend, June 12-14, when each Otetiana district was urged to recruit and send at least 10 men as volunteer workers for various tasks. The council provided five meals and housing, and districts were encouraged to form "motor pools." As Burgdorf said, "lots of work got done."

On June 14, the entire Burgdorf family traveled to Jay to pick up the two mounted beavers for the fireplace mantels of the two camps. As son Chuck Burgdorf (later the long-time ranger at Goshen Scout Reservation) recalled, each beaver ended up wearing a campaign hat made by his mother and carrying a paddle made by his father. Finally, in a slightly more crucial finishing touch, on June 25 water was pumped from the lake, through the new pipes and up to the Mountaineer water tank to begin filling the new water system. The first meal served in the Mountaineer dining hall was breakfast on the next day. Mountaineer was ready for Scouts!

Operating two camps

Though Pioneer had used some temporary sites in 1952 to squeeze in a few more Scouts, the overcrowding in camp hadn't been ideal. Therefore, with two camps now available, the council announced that each would be limited to 250 Scouts per two-week period (as opposed to 340+ the previous summer), for a total of 2000 Scouts at Massawepie over the summer (up from 1375). By November (1952), the third period at both camps was already full, and the council's *Smoke Signals* newsletter urged troops to get reservations in early. Provisional camping was also available for a slightly higher fee. By March, 110 troops (60% of the council) had registered, and a separate Explorer base was planned at the south end of the lake, offering canoe and mountain climbing trips.

To get ready for the 2nd camp, over the winter the council asked in *Smoke Signals* for donations of: books, games, radio, bicycles, drums & bugles, sports equipment, office equipment, dark room supplies, medical equipment, cars, boats, bus, trailer, washing machine, furniture, AV equipment, wheelbarrows, craft tools, theatrical spot lights, .22 rifles, lamps, and mounted animal heads! Some were received. Meanwhile Bob "Parky" Parkinson announced the names of the camp chefs (Val Cushing and Freddy Clark) and touted Cushing's 40 years of experience; camp food is always a top priority! Meanwhile, the council listed former Camp Eagle Island, 98 acres in Sodus Bay, for sale.

Some adjustments were being made based on feedback from 1952. For the trail program, there would be more training of the Scouts before going on trail. Also, several outposts would be staffed with special programs: Dutch oven cooking at Sour Dough (initially on Long Pond), beaver studies at Beaver House, and fly fishing at Royal Coachman (toward the south end of Deer Pond). Also, Scouts and leaders planning to fish were told not to bring live bait to avoid harming the lake trout population. Each camp would have a full waterfront with a certified director, and 70 canoes and 50 rowboats would be available. And baggage loading was changed to the Friday before leaving for camp, from 4-10 PM, at the Culver Road Armory. The Scouts and leaders who boarded the "big yellow busses" the next morning at the Armory didn't need to arrive until 5:30 AM for 6 AM departure, leisurely compared to the previous year's 5 AM gathering. Return was expected around 9 PM.

Interestingly, with two camps open, fewer (6) professional Scouters were assigned to Massawepie in 1953 than in 1952 (7). Parky was now both the overall director and the Camp Pioneer Director, while Joseph Klein directed Camp Mountaineer, and the Explorer Base was directed by Dick Hetherington. Robert Young was Business Manager, Dewey Sawyer was again Director of Trail Camping, and Tommy Rowe was Program Director. It's unclear whether each camp had its own program director as well that summer. Separately, a 4-week CIT program for 15-year-olds was promoted once in *Smoke Signals* but never mentioned again until 1969, so it's unclear whether that ever got off the ground.

Bill Oette, who worked in the Pioneer kitchen in 1953, remembered that the dining hall was quite full and staff were assigned to eat with the same troop all week. Bill said that the kitchen was short of help after some staff quit, and he had so much work that he was tempted to quit too, but Parky promised to get them more help. On one day off, Bill and David Bloomer canoed across the lake and spent the night, and then were grounded by Parky for not checking out properly. (Some things never change: teen-age staff getting in trouble!) Bill also said that Mountaineer was still quite rough that summer.

A highlight of the 1953 season was the camp dedication ceremony on August 1. Austin "Pete" Bleyler spoke to nearly 1000 Scouts, leaders, and guests, and gave some background on the time, effort, and money that it had taken to make Massawepie a reality. NY Lt. Governor Frank Moore then spoke and praised the generosity of the community in raising \$500,000+ for the camp, saying "the citizens of Monroe County never made a better investment than this – in better citizens of tomorrow." He asked the Scouts "to protect your land, make friends with its wildlife, and be good neighbors to the people who live in this community." Thomas J. Babe, Jr., a 12-year-old Scout from Arnett Blvd. in Rochester who had first camped at Massawepie in 1952, promised that they would, in his short speech accepting the camp on behalf of the Scouts.

After the ceremony, there was an Aquacade in which campers demonstrated their aquatic skills, culminating in a waterborne float parade with floats representing scenes from American history. That evening the two camps held a joint campfire, where Thomas J. Keane from the national BSA headquarters in New York City spoke. He described the National Jamboree in Irvine Ranch, CA, that he had just left, and called Massawepie "one of the best, one of the largest, and one of the most beautiful among the 2,000 Scout camps I have seen in America." Later, in September, 3000 rainbow trout (some 6-7" long) were stocked in Deer Pond to help future fly fishing programs.

Massawepie continued to grow in popularity over the next few years, with the attendance growing from 1951 Scouts in 1953 to 2206 in 1955, despite a small boost in the 2-week dining hall fee from \$38.50 to \$41. (The cap on Scouts per period had been raised to 275, but only 250 in the dining hall.) Bob "Parky" Parkinson left in early 1954 to become a Scout Executive in New Jersey, and was replaced as Director of Camping by Duncan McIntosh from the Baltimore Area Council. By April, 1955, McIntosh was gone and Elgin Deering became the General Camp Manager for the 1955-60 seasons. Deering kept his year-round job as Director of Office Services and later as a Field Director for a few years, though he eventually was named Director of Camping.

Camp Eagle Island in Sodus Bay was sold for \$30,000 in Spring, 1954 to two men from Newark who planned to develop summer homes, but the name was retained for the island at the south end of Massawepie Lake. Then, during the summer, tragedy struck when Mountaineer Camp Director Tom Rowe was killed in a car accident during time off from camp. The Pioneer Nature Lodge was dedicated in memory of Rowe, a former nature staffer, and gifts in his memory would be used for future nature equipment.

In September, 1954, the Order of the Arrow Area IIE Conclave was held at Massawepie with 200+ members from 8 lodges in Western New York. Later, it was announced that a new High Adventure Explorer Week would be held at Massawepie at the end of the summer starting in 1955. The pre-camp Massawepie Moots for leaders were held by district rather than centrally starting in 1955. During 1955, two gifts were received for camp: a steel flagpole for Mountaineer from the Thomas Healy VFW Post, and a railroad bell for Camp Pioneer from the B&O Railroad (arranged through local Scouter Sam Grover of Troop 54).

Summer camp attendance in 1955 was successful enough that it was pushing the limits of what two camps could hold. In the fall of 1955, the council asked troops to register early for 1956 summer camp, to help the council decide whether to build the third camp (*Voyageur*) for 1956 or 1957. Apparently the response was strong: the January, 1956, *Smoke Signals* announced that *Voyageur* would be open that summer.

Building Camp Voyageur

Of course, announcing a new camp in January didn't give Property Superintendent Harley Burgdorf much lead time to build the camp before summer. Helpfully, the council planned to run *Voyageur* in 1956 with about half as many Scouts as the other camps, so only half as many troop sites would be needed. But Burgdorf still needed to get a dining hall built. It was also helpful that *Voyageur* would be along the town road south of Pioneer, rather than in a more remote location.

Burgdorf immediately started crews logging in *Voyageur* to clear for the power line and buildings. In February, Elgin Deering and his wife visited to confirm the location of the roads, buildings and sites. Carpenters were working on building latrines, tables, benches, and platforms as lumber was delivered. It was a heavy winter, and the men were also shoveling snow off roofs to keep buildings from collapsing.

Work began in March on clearing the dining hall site, and Chet Johnson's crew poured the foundation in early April. Earl Gilligan, Burgdorf's assistant ranger, worked on clearing for the showerhouse and cook's quarters. By the end of April, the dining hall and showerhouse roofs were ready to be shingled. In May the dining hall floors were poured. Along with those building, that spring the crews also erected a nature lodge and craft lodge, and cleared the troop sites and waterfront. They had again trapped beavers in camp, and one was mounted so that *Voyageur* would have a beaver on its fireplace mantel like the other two camps did. By June the power and water had come to the dining hall, and in early July the staff put out the swimming piers. The camp was ready for Scouts!

Separately, in June Johnson's crew also built a director's cabin, funded by the Davenport-Hatch Foundation, and a new central office. The director's cabin would be the first of many staff cabins along the shore of Catamount Pond. The new office was funded by memorial donations from colleagues and associates of Roy Warren, sales manager of the J. Hungerford Smith Co. and a staff member of the former Camp Pioneer in the 1920s. It was dedicated on August 4, 1956, after a scramble to finish that included Burgdorf's wife Ruth painting the office porch floor on August 2. Earlier, in June the council purchased the 11-acre Roland Lee property at the camp entrance off NYS Route 3, gaining a 5-room house and leaving only three property owners on Catamount Pond.

In September (still 1956), volunteers from the Viking District were staying at Massawepie for a weekend. On Saturday, Sept. 8, some had left a low fire burning in old Cottage #2 (from the hotel era) to "keep the chill off" while they were at a meeting in the dining hall. The cottage caught fire near the chimney and could not be saved, despite use of a camp hose and the efforts of the Piercefield and Tupper Lake Fire Departments. Fortunately, the wind was calm and there was light rain, which prevented any other buildings being lost; however, a 1956 (new!) station wagon owned by Gordon Perry of Rochester was parked by the building and was burned.

In the Fall of 1956, Harley Burgdorf and Earl Gilligan were the only two men working at Massawepie. They built another staff cabin, then over the winter they cleared sites for six more cabins. In the spring, Chet Johnson's crew built the additional cabins. They also tore down old hotel Cottage #5. The next year, a Protestant Chapel was built in Voyageur and a Catholic Chapel at the edge of Pioneer and Voyageur. The Protestant Chapel was dedicated in 1958 to Walter Hubbell, whose family had donated funds during the 1951 campaign. The Catholic Chapel was not named, pending a donation.

Operating three camps

Attendance at Massawepie continued to grow, from 2245 Scouts in 1956 to 2500 in 1959, while the 2-week fee for dining hall campers went from \$43 to \$47. Camp Voyageur added more troop sites. Elgin Deering continued a General Manager of Massawepie and eventually became Director of Camping in 1959. The individual camp directors varied over time as District Executives rotated, but Robert Fee, Stuart Smith, Ralph Spaulding, and Don Terry each served multiple years at several camps. In 1959, a spring Showando at Cutler replaced the previous pre-camp Massawepie Moots for leaders. Four times each summer, busses left from Cobbs Hill Park near the Culver Road Armory, with baggage drop-off 4-9 PM Friday, but by 1959 the riders didn't have to be there until 7:45 AM Saturday.

Some summer staff returned each year, but filling the rest of the 90+ summer positions required regular recruiting and taking a chance on hiring young people. For example, long-time staffer (and eventual District Executive) Bob Maurice remembered,

"Just a few days before one opening season at Camp Pioneer, an adult replacement was needed to operate the popular Trading Post. A phone call by camping director Elgin Deering to a New York city agency resulted in hiring Dan O'Connell who, by any other name, would be called a genuine "people person."

Dan added his own popularity to the entire camping experience. He could retain the first name of every Scout (about 200-plus) from the first time he met them when visiting the Trading Post. Within a few days it provided an added sense of "family" among the camping community."

Among other long-time staffers, Maurice also remembered Dick Betz, who "becoming a food service expert as he coordinated commissary supplies for the benefit of Scouts, staff, and visitors," and eventually became "a skilled manager with a popular restaurant chain located in the Southern U.S." Maurice also recounted that respected Scout Executive Fred Wellington would visit the staff of each camp shortly before Opening Day each year to offer motivational thoughts.

An annual staff reunion in Rochester in December was becoming a tradition. In 1959, the reunion has held Dec. 28 at Central Presbyterian Church at 9 PM after the OA banquet, and included a dance. By then, 500-700 young men had served on staff and were eligible for the reunion.

Funding for growth

By 1958, funds from the 1951 capital campaign had been depleted in developing Massawepie and improving Cutler. The local Girl Scouts were also in need of camp funds, and the Community Chest approved a joint fundraising campaign headed by Howard T. Cumming for Fall, 1958. The campaign goal was \$1.497 million. Of that, the Girl Scouts would receive \$603K to develop the new 617-acre Camp Pine-Wood near Dansville, \$149K to improve Camp Beech-Wood near Sodus, and \$30K for a new local Day Camp site. The Otetiana Council would receive \$247K to finish Camp Voyageur and build a fourth camp at Massawepie, \$50K to improve Camp Cutler, \$50K to buy another local camping site, and \$285K to renovate the Pitkin House on East Avenue (that had been donated to them) and make it their new office. It was agreed that, if the full goal wasn't reached, the Boy Scouts would receive 44.7% of the funds donated and the Girl Scouts would get 55.3%. In the end, about \$1,260,000 was raised by 3000 campaign workers; apparently economic concerns reduced some gifts.

Thanks to the new funding, Camp Voyageur had a newly built office and trading post in 1959, and additions were made to the Pioneer kitchen and trading post (adding a Trail Store), and the central garage/shop. Also, a new central Health Lodge was built on Catamount Pond, funded by donations from the council staff as part of the campaign.

A total of 3002 Scouts, Explorers, leaders, and staff from 144 units attended Massawepie during the summer of 1959. The camp post office handled 35,058 pieces of mail: 17,720 incoming and 17,338 outgoing. Business was booming, and Massawepie was well-positioned to serve the boys of Monroe County heading into the 1960s!

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