

MUSEUM DISCOVERIES

May 2001

A Visit to Old Camp Lasater

Another adventure of historical proportions took place on Tuesday, April 10, when Gray Martin, Bruce Bradley, Bill Batts, Travis Gentry, Charles Griffin, Ken Badgett and Gene Hall visited old Camp Lasater.

Camp Lasater was the first piece of property that was owned and developed as a Boy Scout camp by the Old Hickory Council. The camp consisted of forty-six acres of forested hills and hollows, with the addition between 1923 and 1954 of two small lakes and several structural amenities including latrines, modest dining facilities, one large cabin and a chapel. In comparison with Camp Raven Knob, Camp Lasater was very small; Raven Knob's Lake Sobotta would literally cover more than half the old camp.

A convoy of jeeps left the Scouting center at about 1:45 p.m., headed for the wild wilderness of Lasater in the suburbs of Walkertown – nearly eight miles north of Winston-Salem's civilized downtown. After reaching Akron Drive, Travis Gentry realized that the group had forgotten its water purification tablets; so it was necessary to stop at a service station for some bottled H₂O. [Note that Travis wore his "hiking loafers" and "Sunday pants" on the trip and was heard to say that one can never look too professional when representing the Boy Scouts of America on a field trip. His observations became less polite after jumping one of old Lasater's creeks for the fourth or fifth time – piedmont mud doesn't look good on Argentine leather, Brazilian khaki or cashmere socks!] Stocked with plenty of water, the jeeps made their way to Highway 66 (Old Hollow Road) and the entrance to the former camp.

Immediately upon arrival, Bruce Bradley asked the other members of the party to help him locate some "shoreline" that was needed by a camp staff member back in the 1950s but that he had not be able to find at that time. Since the topography and the layout of Lasater have not seen major alterations, the group was able to take Bruce directly to the "shoreline" of each of the camp's former lakes. He was also able to see the lakes' original spillways and some of the rock/masonry cores of their dams. Even after fifty years, Bruce has not completely recovered from the prank and does not want to talk about it; so don't mention that you read about his experience in this article, and think more that twice about being involved in such antics.

The most memorable relics of the past that remain at old Lasater can be found at the Tom Holder Chapel. Mr. Holder was an adult member of the Camp Lasater staff in 1944 when he died in a successful attempt to rescue a swimmer in trouble. Reports from the time indicate that Holder had a heart condition and that the stress of the rescue encouraged a heart attack. Photos from the printed program for the dedication of the chapel in 1945 show rows of wooden benches, a large rock alter flanked by rustic wooden handrails and chairs, and a small alter with a bronze memorial plaque to Mr. Holder. Today, the large rock alter sits at an unstable angle, in danger of collapse; all the wooden rails are long gone, and only the posts that held the bench boards remain. The bronze memorial plaque to Tom Holder has been removed to a location now unknown. [Note that the restoration of this chapel might be a nice troop service project and, since the chapel site is now privately owned, could be viewed as a potential Eagle Scout project.]

More details about this adventure will be presented next month. If you have questions or want to contribute information, please contact Ken Badgett by e-mail at sckbadgett@surry.net or by regular mail at 884 Rockford Road, Dobson, North Carolina 27017.