

## FRIENDS AND FOUNDERS OF CANYON CAMP

Many energetic and devoted scouters and friends established Apple River Canyon Camp, the first one operated by U.S. Grant Area Council, Boy Scouts of America. This was in 1930. The location was that of the ghost town of Millville, where the East Branch joins Apple River to enlarge it significantly.

We quickly developed a strong affinity for the river, cliffs, beautiful hills, romantic history and geographic challenges of this place. It was a real shock when we were told in 1931 that the State of Illinois was purchasing the area to make it a state park.

So it was goodbye to us. Of course we knew there were other fine camping places in northwestern Illinois and southwestern Wisconsin. But we were emotionally attached to the Apple River Canyon area. Camp Director and Scout Executive Clayton M. Chatters suggested that four of us on the camp staff should join him on a three-day hike through the Apple River valley and nearby regions to see if we could find a new camp site we could like.

The four who joined the project at the end of camp were Fred Landdeck of Wisconsin (Boscobel), William Seeman (Bosco Bill of Boscobel), Paul Watz of Freeport, Illinois and Eugene Vickery of Lena, Illinois. All were seasoned, enthusiastic scouts and campers who had already hiked over much of the country adjacent to Millville.

I will not describe the hike, much as I would like to, because my objective is not to repeat the early U. S. Grant camping history (from 1926 on) but to give you a brief idea of the definition and nature of those later referred to as Founders of Canyon Camp.

The "finders" were the five in the expedition headed by Clayton Chatters. Of these, who became enthusiastic about Coon Creek site, with water, fairly flat central area, cliffs, hills, Apple River, pioneer and Indian background and traces of the old stage road, three returned the next summer (1932) to help operate the camp in its new location. Many years later these three were designated as "founders." Naturally, many others also worked for the success of the camp.

The acknowledged leader was Scout Executive and Camp Director Clayton M. Chatters. About 28 at the time, he was a slender man of medium height, with black hair and moustache, sincere devotion to his family (wife and at that time one son and one daughter) and Scouting, and abundant energy.

He came from Flint, Michigan, was college educated in business and was trained to be a professional scouter. He came to U.S. Grant Area Council in 1927 and remained 10 years.

He was our second council executive. The first, David Brown, had a masters' degree in history. After one year (1926) of establishing the council, with headquarters in Stockton, Illinois, he accepted a position teaching history in Freeport High School.

Mr. Chatters succeeded him, moved headquarters to the basement of the Freeport Public Library and set about organizing the council from the ground up. There were many interested local people, but he was the one who knew how to get them together in committees, recruit scouts and scouters and get the whole thing moving.

He promoted camping from the beginning. In 1927 we had a week at Rockford Camp Rotary (Camp Amos Horton); in 1928 we returned to Rockford; in 1929 we were at Beloit Camp Rotary (I-Kun-A-Kahtsi) and in 1930 we operated our own camp at the Millville site on Apple River.

Clayton Chatters was our highly respected Council Executive for ten years before moving to a Wisconsin council. While I was in medical school in Chicago, he stopped by for a visit two or three times.

Then during World War II he joined the American Red Cross for overseas service. While I was stationed in the Middle East, at Cairo, he looked me up and told me about his adventures in Persia (Iran) and the Persian Gulf. We planned leaves together and took a trip to Palestine to visit Christian and Moslem holy places and see Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Haifa, Nazareth, Bethlehem, the Dead Sea and so on.

After the war he returned to Michigan and joined his wife in a business accounting partnership. He regretted not being able to be with us at our 50th anniversary celebration in 1986 and in '87 or '88 died of complications following heart surgery.

Paul Watz was about nineteen at the time of the finding and founding of the Coon Creek site of Canyon Camp. He was a quiet, intelligent young man with a good sense of humor. He was and remained during his long career in manufacturing in Freeport the embodiment of Scouting principles in everyday life. He remained active in Scouting as a scoutmaster and in other ways. He was awarded the Silver Beaver for outstanding service to boys in Scouting.

Although troubled with medical problems, he was able to take an active part in the 50th Anniversary observation and re-dedication ceremonies in 1986. He has since died and we all lost a loyal friend.

Eugene Vickery, youngest of the three, was a little short of his eighteenth birthday at the time of the search hike, but he had been active in all U.S. Grant Council camp (and a Lena Troop camp in 1926). He had attended the World Jamboree in 1929. When Paul Siple, the Boy Scout with Byrd, visited our camp the first time, in 1931, Vic borrowed the family Buick and served as Paul's chauffeur. Paul earned a doctorate in geography and returned to Antarctica. Eventually, he headed all scientific work of Little America. He is the one who invented the way to measure the wind chill factor.

In 1936, when Paul Siple returned to dedicate our camp in non-antarctic heat of 112 degrees, Vic, then associate director of the camp, again became the official driver for our distinguished visitor. Same car, too.

Later, Vic put in the necessary years to become a physician, medical officer through World War II, and family doctor in Lena, but he always kept in touch with Scouting. His happiest activity (beside having 2 sons become Eagle Scouts) was chairing the committee for the 50th Anniversary observation and re-dedication of Canyon Camp. Among his cherished remembrances from 68 years of Scouting are a plaque from Alpha Phi Omega, Silver Beaver, Distinguished Eagle Scout Award, Silver Wreath from NESA, East Central Regional cane in honor of our 50th Anniversary of Camp and the campaign hat from the 1929 Jamboree.

It has been heartwarming to have all four of my grandsons become active in scouting. I am proud to say that our oldest grandson (14) is an Eagle Scout with bronze palm. His younger brother is a Life Scout coming on fast and their dad (my son in law) is an enthusiastic Scout Leader of 30

boys. Our other two grandsons are in Scouting, one as a cub and the other, First Class with several merit badges, is Dan Vickery who attended Canyon Camp two summers. His home is Pennsylvania and this year he is attending the National Jamboree.

I am happy to be here and I want to offer the highest praise to those many, many dedicated and enthusiastic scouters through all the years who have made Canyon Camp one of the best in the whole U.S.A. Our donors, our staffs and our scouts have been superb.

Eugene L. Vickery, M.D.

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