

A STIGWANDISH HISTORY

Welcome to Camp Stigwandish! Be prepared for fun and adventure. Camp Stigwandish is the oldest, continually operating camp, in the Lake Erie Council, and it is also the smallest. This camp, from the Legacy Northeast Ohio Council and the Greater Western Reserve Council, was conceived in 1929 and dedicated in 1930! It began as about 127 acres and grew into over 300 acres over time.

Offerings at Camp Stigwandish include 20 Campsites, some with shelters. Six cabins. Four shooting sports ranges. A newly constructed Gaga Pit. Three lakes for aquatics and fishing. A COPE course. Trading Post. Dining Hall and newly renovated kitchen. Training Center. Nature/Ecology Center. Observatory, with improvements coming. The White Trail that navigates the camp's perimeter.

Camp Stigwandish also offers a unique program called "The Trailblazer Honor Camping Program" that awards participants with a one-of-a-kind patch and metal pin as the various levels are completed. The award is open to all Cubs and Scouts and their Leaders. The Camp also participates in the LEC's "Triple Crown Award".

A history of Camp Stigwandish is essentially a history of the old Northeast Ohio Council. The idea for a Scout Camp came from Mr. Willard Friend along with a group of local business men that became involved in the area. Mr. Friend was the District Field Executive for the Lake Shore District of the GCC, formally the Greater Cleveland District Council that was formed in 1912 and consisted of the City of Cleveland and Lorain, Lake, Geauga and Ashtabula counties. The area was growing in population and travel was difficult, no freeways! At the GCC Area Board meeting in 1928 it was decided to form a new Council to replace the Lake Shore District. This became the Northeast Ohio Council (NEO).

Mr. Friend was the first Council Executive for the NEO. The Council had grown to 42 Troops and over 1000 Scouts. Scouts at the time had to attend summer camp in the former Warren Council. The need existed for a local Council camp. And in 1929, with a vision, land was purchased and the dream became a reality. Construction began, the Camp was formally dedicated and the first summer camp was held in 1930! A remarkable achievement! The camp became known as the Madison Scout Reservation. The camp had humble beginnings consisting of an Octagon Dining Hall with central stone fireplace; small Adirondak style cabins (PIONEER VILLAGE campsite); some teepees and a shelter at one of the campsites. Additional land was acquired at Mill Creek and a 70 foot by 300-foot waterfront was developed by building a dam on Mill creek. Portions of the dam still remain.

A well was dug and water had to be carried to the kitchen. Camp capacity was 72 campers and the camp fee was ten dollars for two weeks. Some records indicate over two hundred Scouts camped that year. The last official summer camp at Stigwandish was held in 2006. An unofficial summer camp was orchestrated in 2007 by the late Earl Hensel, several other volunteers and myself, in order to save his former Troop. This special camp saw seven of the eight Scout attendees achieve the rank of Eagle Scout!

Three lakes are found on the camp property. INDIAN LAKE was built in 1957. This lake was primarily built for a water supply for camp. However, a number of circumstances put an end to this practice and additional wells were dug. The lake also served as a waterfront for aquatic and fishing merit badges. In 1965 the BASS and CANOE LAKES were added by the efforts of Mr. Stewart Armington whom made possible many capital projects at this time in the history of Camp Stigwandish.

The NEO Camping Committee contacted John “Spikehorn” Meyer of Clare, Michigan to construct the camp. Spikehorn was a farmer, guide, woodsman, hunter, trapper and lumberjack. The Clare locals and his biography suggest he was quite the character. He kept a wildlife museum and a number of live bears. He is renowned for bringing live bears to Michigan’s capital when lobbying the State Senate! Spikehorn brought his own crew and the cedar logs were shipped from Michigan to Madison. From the train depot the logs were transported by horse teams to the camp for construction.

The main road into camp was once a private road. This could have made for some interesting times. With time, the property was abandoned and acquired by the Council. Research by the Ol’ Ranger Earl Hensel notes one historical event that involves camp property was the Girdled Road. This road was commissioned in 1797 and was the first road across the Western Reserve. The road went from the Pennsylvania line near Conneaut to Cleveland. The route entered camp near the main entrance and went south along Chapin Road. The small trees were cut and the larger trees were girdled which severed the water and nutrients to the tree which later died and were removed.

In 1953 the historic Blockhouse Gateway used at the 1950 Valley Forge National Jamboree were erected. The blockhouses were removed in the late 1950’s because of poor condition. They were replaced by the current stone carins dedicated to Willard Friend, the first NEO Council Executive.

Lord Baden-Powell knew the importance of the outdoors and camping because before he started Boy Scouts he took a group of young men camping at Brownsea Island to test his ideas. The early founders of the Northeast Ohio Council also knew the importance of the outdoor program as the first thing they did was to build what would become Camp Stigwandish.

What’s in a name? The Madison Scout Reservation became Camp Stigwandish in 1944 and named after a prominent Native American Chief in the early years of Cleveland’s settlement. He aided the first survey party of the Western Reserve in 1796 and helped the first settlers survive the winter of 1796-97.

He was also known as Stigwandish, Stigonish or Seneca and was chief of the Seneca tribe remaining in the Ohio Country after “Mad” Anthony Wayne’s 1794 victory at Fallen Timbers. The name translates as “Standing Stone”. The Stigwandish OA Lodge altered this to “Standing Rock” and used it as their symbol. The Scouts of the NEO felt that his bravery, sincerity, friendship and honesty reflected the points of the Scout Law. This is supported by one of his contemporaries, Edward Paine, Jr., whose family settled Painesville, and wrote, “Seneca has the dignity of a Roman Senator, the honesty of Aristides, and the philanthropy of William Penn”.

PLEASE NOTE: The north end of Camp Stigwandish rests in Conservation Easements with The Lake Metroparks and the Lake County Soil and Water District. These are PROTECTED AREAS! Strictly adhere to the LEAVE NO TRACE (LNT) PRINCIPLES when hiking or camping in this area.

The natural history of Northeast Ohio began over 4.6 billion years ago (Earth’s formation) and experienced change, movement and transitions from deep time to the present. The bioregion that eventually became Camp Stigwandish was formed by the geological actions of fire, wind, water, erosion, weatherization and ice, lots of ice in the form of glaciers, 2 million to 10000 years ago, that migrated southward from today’s Canada. The action of the glaciers determined the final shaping of the unique landscape we know today.

The geological activity and glacial actions yield the variable topography of camp. This topography in turn influences the temperature, precipitation (along with the effects of Lake Erie) and myriad of soil

types of the bioregion and hence the types of flora and fauna that are found in the different ecosystems of the property.

The bedrock foundation of this bioregion is typically hidden from view because the rocks were worn down by glaciers and covered by glacial till or deposits. The thick, 6000 to 7000 feet, sequence of sedimentary rock, rocks that are stratified or layered, consists primarily of sandstones, shales and limestones that were laid down between 540-300 million years ago when this area was covered by ancient seas, marshes or swamps. The shales and sandstones are exposed along streams and roadcuts and are from the Upper Devonian (360 years old), an example is at the Pop Corey Memorial Campsite, this was also the location of the old rifle range. The basement rocks are much older and are granites and gneisses. Examples are found throughout camp in the form of boulders or boulder erratics that originated at the Canadian Shield and were deposited by the glaciers as they retreated.

Camp Stigwandish is located in the Grand River Valley. The northern part of camp is the Mill Creek valley which is a tributary of the Grand River which became a ragging torrent during the devastating flood of 2006. The debris field from the old rifle range/Pop Cory site was found two to three hundred yards downstream. The Grand River is one of two State and Wild Scenic rivers in Lake County. The other is the Chagrin River located in the western end of the county. Water in camp is supplied by shallow, low-pressure wells and stored in reservoirs for use. Deep wells become contaminated by salt water which is further evidence to support the geology of the area.

The physiographic regions in the area consist of the Lake Plain which is a narrow band along several of the former "Lake Erie" beach ridges on the southern shore of the present-day Lake Erie. The balance of the bioregion is an upland area known as the Allegheny Plateau. The steep area that connects the two different regions is the Portage Escarpment.

Camp is located in a Beech-Maple climax forest in a temperate biome. While beech and maple are the predominant trees in the area, numerous other species are also represented. Several species that were once plentiful in the area and camp fell victim to industry and disease. During the early settlement of Madison and the surrounding area, ship building and the discovery of bog iron and subsequent smelting were major area industries. White oak would be required to build ships and to make charcoal for the iron ore smelting operations. Disease has also taken its toll on several species. American Chestnut fell victim to the Chestnut Blight. The American Elm was devastated by the Dutch Elm disease. More recently ash trees are victim of the emerald ash borer beetle. The camp's hemlock population is also susceptible to Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA). What is an Adelgid (pronounced uh-DEL-jid), you ask? It is a very small aphid-like insect that feeds on sugars stored in the hemlock needle foliage and produce a white woolly covering. It is an invasive insect from Asia (ODNR) and it kills trees. A list of the "Trees of Stigwandish" by the late Earl Hensel is available at the Camp Office for review.

What's in a name, Part II? How were the Campsites (CS) named? Naming campsites is an odd beast. Some are named based on local need or history. Others because of their prominence in some media or place in American or international history and the time of the naming.

KIWANIS CABIN (1950): built by the Tri-County Kiwanis and originally used as a troop lodge. It became the residence of the Camp Director and later Camp Ranger. Earl and his wife Mae lived here until Earl retired in 1983. At this time, it became the Camp Office and Camp Host residence.

ROTARY CABIN (1957): moved to camp and upgraded by local Rotary Clubs.

BUCKEYE LODGE (1951): former health and first aid lodge built and dedicated to Dr. John C. Shimon. Name change to Buckeye Lodge unknown.

TRADING POST (1940): built originally as a camp Administration building. It has served many functions over time and is now back as the Trading Post.

CABINS 1 thru 4: no names at this time, pretty generic! The sixties and early seventies was the hey-day of Scouting and this period saw many changes, thru the efforts of many individuals and organizations that changed the face of Camp Stigwandish. Conclusion is that the cabin construction occurred during this time.

ADVENTURER (1971): Formally the WEBELOS site and name change may be related to Webelos activity awards. As the number of Webelos scout camping increased, decision was made to create a designated area. The area was close to parking and a waterline, latrine and shelters were constructed. Across from the site a special trail was established to meet Webelos outdoor requirements. Its location also proves convenient for troops traveling from other Councils.

JOHNNY APPLESEED (1960s?): John Chapman (1774-1845) explored The Northwest Territory in its early development. He was a businessman and had a vision of the “wilderness blossoming with apple trees”. When settlers arrived, he sold them trees.

EAGLES NEST CAMPSITE (1930s): Currently consists of three sites. It was one of the original campsites. It also contained a tree house for camping! The work was that of the Work Projects Administration (WPA), part of FDR’s New Deal. A second site (DAN BEARD) was relocated and a third added.

DEAD HORSE RIDGE (1962): its name may have been derived because the skeleton of horse was found here during construction.

As camp attendance was increasing, additional sites were needed. A camp road (1962) was added on the west end of camp and additional were cleared in this area.

DAN BEARD (1968?): Daniel Carter Beard, 1850-1941, was born in Cincinnati and raised in Painesville. “Uncle Dan” was a popular illustrator and artist, author, civil engineer, surveyor, naturalist and outdoorsman. He was one of the founding fathers of the BSA and was the National Scout Commissioner in the U.S. from 1910 until his death. The Cleveland Plain Dealer wrote, “Dan Beard credits Painesville and Lake County’s woods and streams for the vision he has as an adult of a new kind of recreation for boys, out of this came American Scouting.” Was one of the original Eagles Nest campsites until relocated to its present location.

IROQUOIS (1968): were a powerful and prominent Eastern Woodland’s tribe. Responsible for the Iroquois Confederacy or League of Six Nations. Significant contributor to the events that lead western expansion from the Hudson River Valley into the Northwest Territories or the Ohio Country.

DANIEL BOONE (1968): Boone, 1734-1820, was an American pioneer and trailblazer. He is one of the most famous pioneers in U.S. history. He spent most of his life exploring and settling the American frontier.

KIT CARSON (1968): Carson, 1809-1868, was a trapper, scout, Indian agent and soldier. His own exploits and those that occurred when he served as a guide for John C. Fremont made Kit an authentic legend of the West.

TECUMSEH (1968?): Tecumseh, 1768-1813, was a member of the Shawnee tribe and eventually became one of their greatest chiefs. He was a proponent for violent resistance against further white expansion and settlement into Native lands. He created a confederacy, a united front, of Indian tribes west of the Appalachian Mountains. His dream collapsed in 1813 when he was killed in a battle with William Henry Harrison, future President of the United States.

GRAND RIVER (1962): was originally located on the point of land north of the BADEN-POWELL LODGE and was relocated to its current location. Named for the Grand River Valley or its proximity to the river.

WOODCRAFTER'S (1962): possibly named because it required extensive clearing of trees to establish as did many of the sites did on the western end.

TED MULLEN (1967): Ted was a District Executive in the old Northeast Ohio Council in the sixties. During that period each District had a specified camp week. And the DE spent that week in camp. In 1967, during a touch football game with the Staff, Ted appeared to have suffered a heart attack, but died from a ruptured aorta. Funding was established to create a campsite in his memory.

Two additional campsites may be found on older camp maps, but both no longer exist, and became the SHOTGUN RANGE for camp. One site was ERIE (1969) and its name could have been derived from two sources. The Great Lake to the north or the Erie tribe. The Erie were a warring and aggressive tribe that once occupied the region until they were extirpated by the Iroquois Confederation. The French, who were likely the first white men in the area, named them the "Lac du Chat" or "Lake of the Cat" and the English settlers changed the name to what sounded like Erie. The newly created OA Lodge of the LEC honors these indigenous peoples and their traditions.

The other site was CASEMENT (1969): named after Jack Casement, 1829-1909, a Painesville resident and was a brigadier general in the Grand Army of the Republic (Civil War). His primary work was a railroad engineer for the Union Pacific and improved the laying of new track among other improvements.

At the northern end of the upper camp we have the BADEN-POWELL LODGE (1964) that has been the Camp's Training Center. To support the B-P Lodge, three ADIRONDAK (1950) structures that were originally built behind the KIWANIS CABIN were moved. These see considerable use during Training and winter camp events. To the north of this complex is PAUL BUNYAN (1964?) named after the mythical King of Lumberjacks born in Bemidji, MN. Bunyan and his giant Blue Ox, Babe, are responsible for tall tales.

As a reminder, the area in the northern end of camp is PROTECTED BY CONSERVATION EASEMENTS with THE LAKE METROPARKS and THE LAKE COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT. LNT PRINCIPLES ARE THE ORDER OF THE DAY! Campsites in the Mill Creek Valley consist of SOLITUDE (1950?) because it was isolated from other campsites and shared the area with the ARTHUR S. HICKOK MEMORIAL SWIMMING POOL (1950), the pool abruptly ended its usefulness following the Earthquake of 1985 when it was hopelessly cracked and beyond repair. The CECIL "POP" COREY (2006) Memorial campsite was the original location of the old RIFLE RANGE. Pop was a legendary adult volunteer for years and was the Rifle Range Director, among other things, during his long tenure. Most signs of the rifle range and buildings were lost during the devastating flood of 2006. The OA Ceremonial Circle is near this area. Close inspection will show that the ecosystem in the valley differs from that in the upper camp.

Supplemental activities in the immediate proximity of Camp Stigwandish that may enhance your unit's program. Madison has a lakefront park on the shores of Lake Erie north of routes 20 and 528. Thompson Ledges is located south of camp in Thompson and has extensive outcroppings of Sharon Conglomerate. The Lake Metroparks is well represented near camp. Its offerings include: Arcola Creek (one of the last remaining natural estuaries in OH); Hell Hollow Wilderness Area (important bird area by Audubon OH); Hidden Valley (the Grand River up close and personal); Hogback Ridge (confluence of Mill Creek and Grand River); River Road Park; and Riverview Park. Canoe and Kayak liveries are located in the area as are numerous Covered Bridges in neighboring Ashtabula County.

Dr. Mike Galgoczy
John Glenn Eagle Scout Class of 1965
Unit Commissioner
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