

1945-2005

*Hidden Valley
4-H Camp*

A look back at 60 years

The Whites Hollow Area was purchased from the VanDuzer farm July 8, 1926 by Watkins Glen State Park. It had been an Indian settlement and a farm prior to this. In 1935 a Civilian Conservation Corps camp was opened in Whites Hollow for some two hundred men. After CCC was discontinued, it was used briefly for a farm labor camp. In 1945 it was scheduled for demolition when 4-H Executive Committee members and 4-H leaders approached the Finger Lakes State Parks Commission to save certain buildings to be used as a youth camp and a youth leadership training site. The Park Commission did not have personnel or budget to equip or operate the camp. Mr. Herbert Blance, the general superintendent of Finger Lakes Parks, and 4-H Agent Carl B. Garey worked out a plan whereby the Schuyler County Extension Service, 4-H Division, would equip and manage the camp.

The first season of camping included four sessions with 120 campers in each. In 1981 the camping season included one week of staff training and seven sessions of 150 campers each. A week long session run by a church group and one by a children's center completed the ten week summer season. Camper fees have gone from \$.10 per day in 1946 to \$72 per week in 1981 finally to a current price of \$240.00 per week. Total receipts from camp have risen from \$1,326 in 1946 to approximately \$106,000 in 2004.

Program and facility development has been aided by 4-H and community volunteers as well as State Parks staff. Initially, Schuyler County held sole 4-H responsibility for the camp. This lasted for several decades, after which the 7 County Association was formed. Schuyler resumed sole 4-H responsibility in 1999.

Early development of camp was directed by Schuyler County Club Agent Carl Garey; the Camp Committee, with liberal and enthusiastic assistance from State Leaders John Lennox and Martha Leighton; and Club Agents Robert Bale and Lloyd Strombeck; staff members including Mrs. Alva Dopp in the kitchen, Mrs. Ida Carpenter in the White House, Anne Cartmell Elder, Joyce Hartline Allen and Peggy Payne in program directing; Sherry Huntley and Peggy Payne at the pool and George Allen, John Elder, Paul Chapman and Jim Carrier in management and remodeling work. Don Smith, Chairman of our 4-H Camp Committee for some 10 years and others, including Mrs. Frank Updyke, Frank Ganung, Mrs. Dorothy Hopkins, Mrs. Don Wickham, Arthur Kopp, Mrs. John Barton, Howard Hubbard, Barbara Bell, Carl

and Margaret Pound, Jim Rice and Charles Keach have spent long hours in solving problems and improving camp.

Continued growth and development has been carried on over the years under the direction of 4-H staff with the assistance of the 4-H Camp Committee and the State Park Staff. Camp has developed from a single county program to one which now involves six counties:

- ◆ Broome
- ◆ Chemung
- ◆ Schuyler
- ◆ Steuben
- ◆ Tioga
- ◆ Tompkins

With the addition of counties to the camp program, the camp committee structure has also changed. The committee is now made up of one volunteer from each county and two from Schuyler County. 4-H Educators serve a supporting and advising role with county representatives acting as voting members.

Hidden Valley has always been known for its great programming. An early staff manual lists major program areas: nature study, crafts, outdoor living, fishing, first aid, and waterfront.

For many years, these same programs were offered under the general programs of Arts and Crafts, Sports and Recreation, Nature, and Aquatics. Today, clubs aren't the only way for youth to be involved in 4-H. Residential Camp serves as an excellent delivery method of 4-H Education. Studies show that one week of residential camp offers the equivalent to a year and a half of after-school programming.

For many years camp was directed by agent staff from Schuyler and cooperating counties. In 1969 Frank Valletta was hired as the first full time director. He was followed by our second director, Dave Henry, who was hired in 1972.

The camp C.I.T. program was introduced by Mrs. Madeline Sanford and has trained hundreds of young people in camp procedure and leadership. In 1980 a state committee, involving agents and volunteers from camps across the state, revised the C.I.T. program under the direction of Bernice Scott from the Department of Rural Sociology at Cornell University. This program continues to be an integral part of training future camp staff

In 1967 Hidden Valley was first accredited by the American Camping Association. In 2004, after going several years without accreditation status, Hidden Valley achieved it again. This is a distinction that only 2,422 out of 12,000 camps in the United States hold.

Over the years special programs have been conducted to round out the general camping experience. Most special programs have been aimed at the teen and family audience. Examples are horseback riding, bike tripping, out of camp canoe trips, sailing and family camp.

In 1973 a family camp was instituted. Now an annual tradition, the program is designed to give families an opportunity to use the facilities and programs at camp as a family unit, and provide youth with a familiarity with Hidden Valley.

Another successful program started in 1973 was the horseback riding program. It is now operating from the Schuyler County Youth Fair site with ten horses and two riding instructors. This camp favorite brings a touch of 4-H traditional programming to Camp.

While the interest of youth, camp committee volunteers, and staff have played a major role in program change, there is another influence that has had a great impact on not only program but also facility and management. Part seven of the New York State Health Code came into effect in the early 70's. This code was written specifically for children's camps and has not only changed camps dramatically but has been a prime factor in the demise of many camps across the state. Fortunately for Hidden Valley, our dedicated



volunteers, 4-H staff, and State Park staff have created a program and facility much envied by the camping industry of New York State.

As previously mentioned, the facility was first built as a CCC camp in 1926. 4-H programming began to use the facility in 1945 and is now in its 60th year of operation.



In the early years records show 4-H volunteers helped in facility improvement by working to upgrade the interior of the buildings at the site. State Park staff worked hard to re-roof and make repairs to foundation supports.

Other accomplishments made under the leadership of Carl Garey were the drilling of a new well, construction of a new bathroom facility and development of camping areas. Mr. Gary passed away in 2004, but he will always be a part of camp, and is commemorated with a founder's maple tree and rock next to the Old Dining Hall.

As new health codes came into effect, more pressure was felt to improve facilities and management practices. New platforms for tents were built and cabins divided and cut in two to meet new requirements for space, exits, etc. New swimming pools were added in 1967. An increased effort has been required in staff training and emergency preplanning and health care. In 1981 the current pool was built, and revitalized in 1998-99.



As early as 1964 the camp committee discussed the possibility of relocating camp. This was again discussed in 1972. At about the same time, a concentrated effort to have dollars appropriated to improve the existing facility was mounted by 4-H volunteers and State Park staff. In 1973 the first funds were appropriated to begin a major renovation of the facility.

A new restroom facility and new cabins have been constructed on the south side of Glen Creek. A new main lodge housing the dining, staff

and nursing facilities was completed in 1980. A new well has been drilled and the water and electrical systems were renovated. A new bridge over Glen Creek has also been constructed. Existing cabins were refurbished. Gateway, a portion of Pine Cabin and the old shower house were removed in 1980-81. The Beaver building was also removed and was used to build two different cabins. The old recreation hall was scheduled for demolition in the fall of 1981, but remains yet today. The old dining hall was used for years as an arts and crafts/rec building/nature, but primarily serves as a storage facility. In 1996, construction began on a new Arts and Crafts building, dedicated to the memory of Stacey Greene, a camper/Junior Counselor who was killed in an auto accident in 1996.



This major upgrading of Hidden Valley 4-H Camp would not have been possible without the dedicated effort of the Finger Lakes State Park Staff, Park Staff in Albany, Watkins Glen State Park Staff, 4-H volunteers and staff who have done the work to get the project planned and developed. Also the work would not have been completed without State Park maintenance and construction crews and the Y.A.C.C. (Young Adult Conservation Corp.)

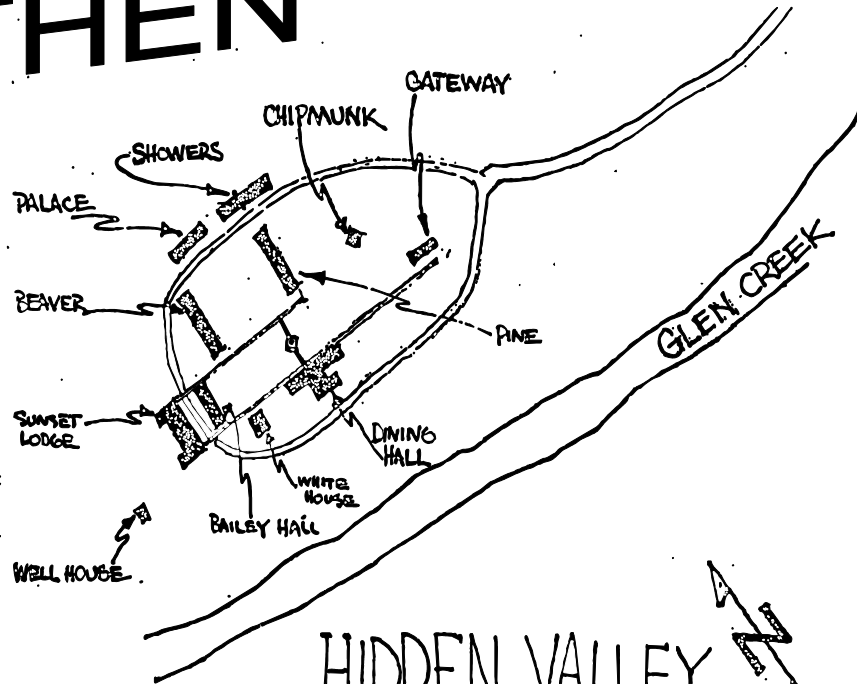
In addition to Residential Summer Camp, Hidden Valley also hosts a Spring Retreat and Fall Camp Weekend. These weekends are planned by Schuyler County Cooperative Extension and aim to introduce 4-H youth to camp, and Hidden Valley campers to 4-H.

In the 60 years that 4-H has been involved with Hidden Valley's summer programs over 40,000 youth have passed through its gates. The total number of children and their families reflect a huge impact on the area. Many people continue to contact the Schuyler County 4-H Office with stories of old. They voice concerns that Hidden Valley

4-H Camp will not be around for their children or children's children to enjoy. Keeping abreast of the ever changing legal aspect has been both beneficial and hampering. New codes mean tearing down the old. A historic building will be rebuilt, keeping the same look yet adding new interior. These changes somehow make us stronger, force creativity, and will add layers to a story with chapters yet to be written.



THEN



NOW

