

# Eleanor's Vignettes



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## Camps Move West!

In 1905 *World's Work Magazine* listed 700 private camps diverse in character and purpose, but almost all in New England. This vignette tells briefly of four early private camps in continuous existence since the turn of the century. Each was a first in its state, each had a different motivation, and each has made its contribution. All are ACA accredited.

### *Camp Choconut*

In 1896 Roland J. Mulford, then 25, opened Camp Choconut, a camp for older boys on his mother's farm near Friendsville, PA. His daughter writes that he wanted to be near his widowed mother during the summer when he was free from teaching, so a small select camp seemed a good idea. The farm was large, beautifully situated in a rural area with a fine private lake and friendly neighbors. Dr. Mulford was an Episcopal minister and teacher who founded and served as headmaster of the Ridgefield School after some years of teaching in private

schools in Maryland and Connecticut. The early emphasis was on athletics and geared to the interests of young men.

Sara Mulford Winlock, Roland's sister, helped him from the beginning. In 1912 she took over the operation and for 30 years served as the real force behind Choconut. It has continued as a camp for 50 younger boys, making extensive use of the farm and the natural resources of the countryside. Individual attention and group projects are featured. The present director, Hamill Horne, was a counselor and key staff member for a number of years and has adapted and broadened the program.

### *Camp Greenbrier*

Camp Greenbrier (1898-Alderson, WV) was initially a tutoring camp, established by Dr. Walter Hullihen, chancellor of the University of the South and one of the professors. Ten students came the first year, and the numbers quickly increased. The campers lived in two large tents on the riverbank, with meals prepared in a cook tent and served under a tent fly. Several old buildings on the site were made usable. Canoeing and baseball were featured from the beginning, with playfields and tennis courts soon added. Dr. Hullihen had spent two summers exploring rivers from Connecticut to Georgia to find the perfect campsite with beauty, adequate space, privacy, and good canoeing.

During World War I the entire camp was run on a military basis with trenches dug for the practice of warfare under military personnel. After the war, sport facilities were greatly increased and proficiency in sports and outdoor living skills were emphasized as part of a well-rounded program. The setup of rows of two-man pup tents continues to the present.

The record states that from the beginning the camp had been "the child of a group of dedicated men, most of whom were teachers and youth workers and brought their boys with

them." The long tenure of staff and directors, plus a camper return of about 80 percent, in part explains the continued growth and excellence of this first Southern private camp.

### *Camp Highlands for Boys*

A group of wealthy parents of older boys attending the University of Chicago Lab School wanted their city-reared sons to have a summer of work and wilderness experience and persuaded Dr. Harry Gillet, the principal, to undertake such a project. In June 1904 Dr. Gillet; Mr. Kester, a teacher; his brother, a carpenter; and 10 boys set out for the Wisconsin north woods, and found an old resort on Plum Lake near Sayner which suited their purpose. The first summer was a hard one with the building of passable dirt roads, repair of usable old buildings, clearing the underbrush, and developing a swimming area. It was a satisfying summer and double the number applied the next year. Fifty boys came in 1908 to work and explore the north woods country. The boys for many years slept in tents equipped with hammocks for sleeping and dingle bats (a mosquito proof netting) carefully adjusted over them. Though cabins replaced tents, the dingle bats remain.

But Highlands is the story of "Doc" Monilaw who came as a "director" (counselor) in 1911 and purchased the camp in 1914. For 45 years he gave Highlands his wholehearted care and devotion. He was in charge of athletics and physical education at the Lab School, as well as the medical examiner. He was strait-laced with a strict moral code and high expectations of campers and staff. He stressed character building as a major goal to be achieved by productive work, sportsmanship through sports, and excellence in any endeavor. He was a true nature lover with the mystique so evident in the earliest days of camping and communicated this to the camper. His staff was carefully selected for personal

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character and outdoor and athletic skills.

The work program continued, but with more time devoted to activities. Highlands is still a water-oriented camp with swimming as a specialty. Music has always played an important part as have poetry and stories around the campfire. The entire camp held "Doc" in awe and respect, a larger than life figure on whom "the sun rose and set." He inspired a wholesome and intense loyalty and camp spirit as the alumni give witness.

In 1959, at age 85, he arranged for a corporation of six long-time staff to take over the camp, to assure its continuance, and to maintain standards and a sense of values. It could not fall into the hands of developers, resort keepers, or a camp given to fads and gimmicks without true merit.

And so Highlands continues, with necessary changes, but holding to basic principles.

#### *Camp Mishawaka*

George F. Green, the founder of Mishawaka in 1909 at Grand Rapids, MN, was a physical director and coach with long experience with boys in private preparatory and public high schools. He was critical of the philosophy and methods of a camp in which he had worked for two years and decided to start his own camp embodying his own ideas and principles. He employed only college graduates (most of them teachers) and he served plenty of good wholesome food, family style.

He considered athletic work the most important phase of camp life, giving every boy the chance to play, compete, and develop. Stress was laid on form rather than participation. He gave personal oversight and direction to each boy's physical development and was concerned about the character and morality of every boy. He conducted a half hour of calisthenics every day for the camp of 90 boys. He was a strict disciplinarian and life was Spartan in his regime.

He was close to the boys on a one-to-one basis and most of them returned his interest and affection in spite of his iron hand. The counselors were less happy about his authoritarian attitude and control, and there was a high turnover of counselor staff. Camp was strictly a man's world with all women barred, except Mrs. Green.

In a camp brochure he noted, "An institution which specializes in boy life, in making clean young manhood,

in discovering the hidden channels in boy's mind and heart, and in guiding the boy's life past submerged rocks—that institution should commend itself to every parent . . . Hence the idea of a summer camp for boys. Camp Mishawaka lays the foundation for real men." Most parents were enthusiastic and loyal. Ted Cavins characterized him as a strong positive formative influence on the character, bodies, and attitudes of some 1,500 boys, during the 23 years he ran Mishawaka. (This report is abridged from a report by Ted Cavins, who joined the Mishawaka staff in 1930, and remained until his retirement in 1975, having served in various capacities from counselor to director-owner.) □

#### *Acknowledgement*

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