

History of Tanah Keeta Scout Reservation

The following was taken from the book "Gulfstream Scouting 1910-1985", information at camp (plaques on buildings, etc.), and the recollections of longtime scouters.

The Tanah Keeta Scout Reservation is the name of the 640 acre property owned by the Gulf Stream Council at the southern end of Martin County. The property contains Camp Loxahatchee to the western side, and Camp Clear Lake to the eastern side.

Sometime in 1949, Council Board member Ed Menninger of Stuart told Pat Patterson (Scout Executive) that approximately 12 square miles of the land known as Camp Murphy was going to be deeded to the State of Florida by the Federal Government. He further stated that the scouts might be able to acquire 1 of the 15 sections for a suitable camp location. Jack Faircloth, along with Alf Nielsen, Clyde Ellis, Tom Steele, Tommy Reese, Mike Machek and Pat Patterson loaded into Jack's Buick.....and toured the wilderness area. That "drive" is how the present site was selected.....and the rest is history!

In 1953, when the Camp Murphy property was conveyed to the State of Florida by a bill from the Federal Government, part become the present Jonathon Dickenson State Park, and the rest was open to other groups. Jack Faircloth, Alf Nielsen, Pat Patterson and Thomas Reed worked to obtain the one square mile section identified during the "drive" for the Gulf Stream Council. There were several legal complexities, and those were solved with the assistance of Phil O'Connell and Harry Johnston. A copy of the bill, dated in 1953, giving Section 15 to the Council is on file in the Council office. The name Tanah Keeta was chosen for the property, as it is translated in the Hichiti dialect as "The Gathering Place", and seemed appropriate.

In 1955, a newspaper article shows the first building to be built at camp, a small concrete structure, possibly a pump-house or enclosed electric terminal. The funds to build this structure were donated by the West Palm Beach Civitan Club. Florida Power and Light installed the 44 telephone poles needed to bring electric service to the camp.

The camp opened for business in February of 1957, and the first summer camp was held in June of that year. The summer camp was held at the area presently known as Camp Clear Lake. It should be noted that Clear Lake at that time was exactly that.....a lake with water so clear that you could see your feet as you treaded water! Later efforts to combine Clear Lake with the other nearby lakes.....to create a contiguous canoeing experience.....allowed the chemicals from those other lakes to take away that original crystal clear water makeup.

The following is an accounting of the different buildings, structures, and significant areas that make up the present Scout Reservation.

- **Docks at Clear Lake (1956)** – Thomas Reese secured \$2,800 to have cement piles and treated stringers for the dock structure. Mike Machek (Camping Chair) reports that Troop 302 and Troop 395 built the docks.
- **Dining Hall (1957)** – the Council spent \$36,986 to build the original dining hall and kitchen in time for the first summer camp. In 1958, the Council spent another \$7,566 to complete different elements of the dining hall. In 1978, the dining hall was extended, the kitchen relocated, and the old kitchen was converted to the cook's cabin at a cost of \$99,000. In 1986, the dining hall was named the "Arnold M. Bauer Lodge" in recognition of Mr. Bauer's donations to the scout reservation (plaque in dining hall).
- **OA Lodge Building (1955-59)** – the building was originally built as the Health Lodge, and was remodeled / converted to the OA Lodge Building in 1998.
- **Ranges (1959)** – Clyde Ellis (Camping Chair) reported that a new archery range and rifle range had been constructed at the present location of the COPE course on Lakota Way. The Lion's Club of Boynton donated the funds to build the ranges. In 1970, the ranges were relocated to the present location at the end of range road. Funds for this project were donated by the Jupiter/Tequesta Rotary Club. This project also included the addition of a shot gun range to the rifle and archery offerings. In 2007, the Jupiter/Tequesta Rotary Club did a major renovation of the ranges. The renovation was in memory of Bob Steinmetz, Ranger Steve Steinmetz's father.
- **Camp Master Cabin (1955-59)** – was originally built as the Ranger's Residence. In 2003, the screened in porch (in the back) was closed in, and the building was converted to a Camp Master Cabin by scouting volunteers.
- **Pump House (1955)** – thought to be the building located to the north of the dining hall was reported in a newspaper article to be the first building built at camp.
- **Hand Carved Canoe (1942)** – at the time of the charter of the OA Lodge 237, an Indian Chief from Big Cypress was hired to build a 16 foot dugout canoe for use in ceremonies. The canoe, under the cover of a shake shingle structure, was originally located next to the gateway. During the construction of the Lassiter Building in 2014, the canoe was moved to a safe location. In 2016, the Vigil OA committee took on the renovation/relocation as a "Vigil Legacy" project.....to find a final resting place for our oldest tangible piece of Gulfstream Council and Tanah Keeta Scout Reservation history.
- **Program Cabin (1955-59)** – was originally built to house the cook for the dining hall. It was remodeled (1998) by the Jupiter/Tequesta Rotary Club to house the program chair during summer camp.

- **Camp Cabins (1955-59)** – during this time period, there were 16 cabins constructed throughout camp. Many service groups donated the monies for the cabins.
 - **Cabins #1, #2, & #3** – are located north of the Lassiter Building. Cabin #1 was removed as part of the Lassiter construction in 2014. Cabin #2 was converted to the Shooting Sports Storage. Cabin #3 was converted to the Climbing and COPE Storage.
 - **Cabins #4, #5, & #6** – are located next to the dining hall, and are used to house staff and visitors. In 2002, the Jupiter/Tequesta Rotary Club remodeled these cabins.
 - **Cabins #7, #8, & #9** – are located on the other side of the pond from the dining hall. Cabin #8 is presently used for storage by the Rangers, and the other two cabins (#7 & #9) have been eliminated to make way for program areas. Cabin #8 is slated to be remodeled by the Jupiter/Tequesta Rotary Club some time in 2017.
 - **Cabins #10, #11, & #12** – are located to the north of the swimming pool, and are used to house staff and visitors. In 2005, cabin #12 was renovated by the Jupiter/Tequesta Rotary Club. In 2009, cabins #10 & #11 were also renovated by the Jupiter/Tequesta Rotary Club.
 - **Cabins #13, #14, & #15** – are located across the road from #10-12, and are presently used for storage for summer camp, OA, WB, and other groups. In the 1970's and 1980's these cabins were used for the nature area during summer camp. The Jupiter/Tequesta Rotary Club has slated to begin renovation of these cabins starting in 2018.....to complete their cabin renovation master plan.
 - **Cabin #16** – Is located by the dorms on Sugar Sand Road, and is currently not in use. The Jupiter/Tequesta Rotary Club is slated to renovate this cabin in late 2016.
- **Wooden Storage Buildings (2009-2010)** – the Jupiter/Tequesta Rotary Club built two buildings on site, and originally put them on pilings in the dorm area to serve as additional cabins for the staff. Shortly after they were put in place, a county inspector deemed the buildings did not meet the required code for occupancy.....and that the buildings must be relocated to the maintenance yard or removed from the property. In 2016, permits were secured to put the buildings back in service.....but as storage buildings. One will be used by the OA Lodge for product sales and storage, and the other building is slated to be moved by the dorms for storage for that end of camp or possible staff laundry.
- **Docks at Loxahatchee (1961)** – the Council secured \$2,800 to have cement piles and treated stringers for the dock at the river. The docks were rebuilt in 2004, with donations from Bill Koch.
- **Pine Trees in Camp (1963)** – Craig Bell of the Container Corporation of America donated 15,000 pine seedlings that were planted by volunteers throughout camp. Those long leaf pine seedlings were planted throughout the southern area of camp.
- **Welcome Pavilion (2001)** – was constructed by the Jupiter/Tequesta Rotary Club. There are several stories about the fate of the previous welcome structure, but suffice it to say,

there was a new pavilion needed and the Rotary came to the rescue. In 2016, the pavilion was renovated by Larry LaRosa, Tom Johnson, Dave Pantone, and Steve Jackson.

- **2nd Ranger Residence (1996)** – was originally called the “Friends’ House” after Harold Friend and was intended to house visiting dignitaries and to be the new location of the health lodge. The project was named after John E. Leassor. The building represented two buildings that were donated by Pratt Whitney, moved to the reservation, and combined into one building. Construction was led by Bernie Hirsch under the direction of Reggie Knight. In 2015, the building was converted to a residence for the 2nd Camp Ranger.
- **Staff Dorms (2000)** – the two buildings on Sugar Sand Road were originally 4 different buildings that were donated by Pratt Whitney, move to reservation, and combined into the two buildings that exist today. The project was named after John E. Leassor, and built by volunteers from Ship 307 & 310 and other volunteers.
- **Nature Lodge (1985)** – was originally built as an open air pavilion that was constructed by members of Troop 840, in memory of Fred O’Toole Jr. The pavilion was later enclosed and remodeled by the Jupiter/Tequesta Rotary Club to convert it to the present use.
- **Handicraft Building (1978)** – was originally built as an open air pavilion that was constructed by the West Palm Beach Rotary Club. In 1999, the pavilion was enclosed and renovated by the Jupiter/Tequesta Rotary Club to convert it to the present use.
- **Scoutmaster Lounge / Quartermaster Storage (1980)** – is located east of the dining hall was originally constructed by Butch Snyder. The front half was the original location of the trading post. In 2014, the front half was converted to a scoutmaster lounge upon completion of the Lassiter building.
- **Maintenance Yard & Buildings (1980’s)** – were built at different times, and were the result of donations by several loyal scouters.....
 - **Auto Barn / Office (1985)** – was built Ron Dragula.
 - **Pole Barn / tool / supply Storage (1987)** – was built by Ron Dragula.
 - **Lumber Barn (1987)** – was built by Bernie Hirsch.
 - **Chemical Storage (1984)** – was built by Ranger Jerry Pence.
 - **Paint Storage (1984)** – was built by Ranger Jerry Pence.
 - **Maintenance Yard (1985)** – a series of concrete pours make up the entrance and the “slab” for the maintenance yard. The concrete was poured by Ranger Jerry Pence.
- **Ranger Residence (1985)** – located off Boy Scout Road, was constructed by Ben Edwards, with monies from the capital campaign.
- **Swimming Pool Complex (1985)** known as the “Aquatics Center” was built with donations from a capital campaign, selling gallons of water for \$1,000. The aquatic center was later named for Ralph S. Evinrude. The bathhouse was built in memory of Tim Campbell.
- **Boathouse (1955-59)** – believed to be the first storage building at the reservation. Located at the Loxahatchee waterfront, it housed the summer camp and waterfront supplies.

- **Ft. Blanchard Amphitheater (1987)** – was originally constructed by Aal-Pa-Tah Lodge at a cost of \$5,000. In 1988, the original breezeway was filled in, and seating was removed to produce a grassy area for the anticipated large crowd for the OA Section Conference. The existing stage is pretty much the same as the original.....with the same beautiful view of the river.
- **COPE Course (1988)** – was constructed with mostly low elements. In 2001, Charlie Griffiths expanded the course to include more low elements, and the present high offerings.
- **Climbing Wall (1992)** – was constructed by the Order of the Arrow, Lodge 237. The funds for the project were raised by the Lodge. Poles were installed by FPL and stairs constructed by Ray A. Simpson, Sr.
- **All Faiths Chapel (1985)** – the “Ray Weaver” memorial All Faiths Chapel was built with donations from Ray Weaver. The current location is on the south end of the parade field. The gateway for the entrance was constructed in 2005 by Tom Johnson, Larry LaRosa, Dave Pantone, and other members of Troop 111 in Royal Palm Beach.
- **Camp Loxahatchee Gateway (2005)** – at the entrance to camp from the parking area was constructed by Tom Johnson, Larry LaRosa, Dave Pantone, and other members of Troop 111 in Royal Palm Beach.
- **The Mike Machek Trail (1988)**. It was a 3 ½ year project, by founder Clayton Jones started in 1984, to construct a nature trail to showcase the beauty of the camp. The 5.2 mile trail has been adopted by the Order of the Arrow’s Aal-Pa-Tah Lodge, and the lodge currently maintains the trail. In 2016, Lodge members Larry LaRosa (current trail advisor), Tom Johnson, and other members of Troop 111 built an informational marque at the Welcome Center to provide a map and to bring attention to the start of the trail.
- **Flag Pole Area (1993)** – located on the parade field, is in memory of George Buck, a Scoutmaster for Troop 132 in Palm Beach Gardens. The troop did all of the work other than the concrete and brick work.....for a total donation by the troop of \$5,500.
- **Waterfront Shelter (2003)** – was constructed by Drew Hains, Charlie Griffiths, James Schede, Ranger Steve Steinmetz, and a host of volunteers. The trusses for the shelter were donated by Space Coast Truss Company. The remaining funding was provided by Drew Hains.
- **OA Ring & Amphitheater (2011)** – the Aal-Pa-Tah Lodge built an OA Ring just south of the Lodge building at a cost of \$10,600. The funds for construction were from the Lodge and the “Friends” of the Lodge. The labor for this project was provided by the Lodge members.
- **Gilwell Field (2007)** – the present location of Gilwell is just north of the COPE area, and was constructed by a team of “Woodbadge Alumni”, under the guidance of Hung Nuygen. In addition to the Gilwell Field, the team also built the campsites for all eight of the “critters”.
- **Lassiter Headquarters Building (2014)** – this building is the home of the Trading Post, staff offices, health lodge, and functions as a training center. The principle donor was William

Lassiter at a cost of \$1.1 million for the entire project. The Bachelor Foundation covered the project costs not covered by the Lassiter donation. The grassy area to the north was established as a water retention area as part of the building project....which now serves as the site of the volleyball and soccer field built by the Aal-Pa-Tah Lodge.

- **Multi-Use Court (2016)** – the original camp basketball court (built sometime in the 80’s) had to be removed to make way for the construction of the Lassiter Building in 2014. As a component of the “Scout Strong, Gator Tough” initiative, the Aal-Pa-Tah Lodge took on the project of bringing back this popular camp attraction. The new court will serve as a forum for not only basketball, but also four square and many other games popular to the youth. The project has been funded by donations through the Lodge, and with a grant from the National Order of the Arrow. The court is located just south of the Program Cabin.
- **Gaga Pit (2016)** – was constructed and funded entirely by the Aal-Pa-Tah Lodge. The Lodge Advisor, Steve Whalen, spearheaded this project in response to his youth leadership’s (LEC’s) request after attending a Section OA event. While most have no idea what a gaga pit actually is, one thing is perfectly clear....the Scouts love to play this ball game! The pit is located south of the Program Cabin.
- **Boy Scout Road (2015)** – The road known as “Boy Scout Road” was paved by principle donors were J.W. Cheatham LLC that installed the asphalt, and Hardrives Inc. performed the excavation and built the substructure for the road. The estimated cost of the project was approximately \$500,000.....representing the first paved road at the reservation. Hardrives Inc. also that put down the substructure and graded the existing parking area.
- **Campsite Pavilions & Latrines** – the campsite pavilions and latrines/shower houses were constructed at different times, and by a host of different “donors”. The following is the listing of these structures in roughly the order of original construction:
 - **Clear Lake Shower House (1957)** – was built to support the first summer camp held at Clear Lake by scouting volunteers. The original structure was a simple wooden shower house. In 2000, the existing shower house was expanded to include toilets by Jupiter/Tequesta Rotary Club. In 2004, the Jupiter/Tequesta Rotary Club completed the full renovation of the shower house.
 - **Cherokee & Blackfoot Latrines (1957)** – were built to support the first summer camp held at Clear Lake by scouting volunteers. Over the years, volunteers and the Rangers have maintained these structures.
 - **Ponderosa Pavilion (1980)** – The existing campsite pavilion and latrine/shower house was constructed by Bernie Hirsch and Ranger Pence.
 - **Fox Pavilion (1980)** – The existing campsite pavilion and latrine/shower house was constructed by Bernie Hirsch and Ranger Pence.
 - **Ute Pavilion (1980)** – The existing campsite pavilion and latrine/shower house was constructed by West Palm Beach Kiwanis Club.

- **Tequesta Pavilion (1984)** – The existing campsite pavilion and latrine/shower house was constructed by scouting volunteers under the guidance of Bernie Hirsch and Butch Snyder.
- **Timuqua Pavilion (1985)** – The existing campsite pavilion and latrine/shower house was constructed by scouting volunteers under the guidance of Bernie Hirsch and Butch Snyder.
- **Sugarsand Pavilion (1985)** – The existing campsite pavilion was constructed by West Palm Beach Rotary Club.
- **Mohawk Pavilion (1986)** – The existing campsite pavilion and latrine/shower house was constructed by Ron Dragula.
- **Apache Pavilion (1991)** – The existing campsite pavilion was constructed by volunteers in Troop 753. The latrine/shower house was constructed by West Palm Beach Rotary Club.
- **Muskogee Pavilion (1992)** – The existing campsite pavilion was constructed by Troop 871 with donations from Sailfish District Scouters. The latrine/shower house was constructed by Ron Dragula.
- **Cherokee Pavilion (2000)** – The existing campsite pavilion in the Clear Lake section of camp was constructed by Drew Hains, Charlie Griffiths, James Schede, the Ranger, and a host of volunteers. The trusses for the shelter were donated by Space Coast Truss Company.
- **Blackfoot Pavilion (2000)** – The existing campsite pavilion in the Clear Lake section of camp was constructed by Drew Hains, Charlie Griffiths, James Schede, the Ranger, and a host of volunteers. The trusses for the shelter were donated by Space Coast Truss Company.
- **Creek Pavilion (2001)** – The existing campsite pavilion and latrine/shower house was constructed by Butch Snyder.
- **Osceola Pavilion (2003)** – The existing campsite pavilion was constructed by Drew Hains, Charlie Griffiths, James Schede, the Ranger, and a host of volunteers. The pavilion was dedicated to the memory of Tom Sturrock. The funding was provided by Tom Ehrbar through the Brown Foundation. The latrine/shower house was constructed by Aal-Pa-Tah Lodge.
- **Seminole Pavilion (2003)** – The existing campsite pavilion was constructed by Drew Hains, Charlie Griffiths, James Schede, the Ranger, and a host of volunteers. The trusses for the shelter were donated by Space Coast Truss Company. The funding was provided by Tom Ehrbar through the Brown Foundation. The pavilion was in memory of John “Skipper” Leassor. The latrine/shower house was constructed by Ron Dragula.

- There are 4 “white” monument bases in the camp in recognition of key individuals in the history of TK Scout Reservation and Gulfstream Council. They are as follows:
 - *In front of the* Dining Hall.....**Albert Costello**....1935-1992 in recognition of his efforts as the founder of the Sporting Clays Corporate Challenge for the Gulf Stream Council.
 - *In front of the* SM Lounge.....**M.E. “Doc” Rinker**.....for his interest in the camp and in his support of Gulf Stream Council.
 - *In front of the* 2nd Ranger Residence.....**Mark Simpson**.....Benefactor and Founder of the Sporting Clays Corporate Challenge for the Gulf Stream Council.
 - *In front of the* Handicraft lodge.....**Thomas R. Pledgler**.....Benefactor and Founder of the Sporting Clays Corporate Challenge for the Gulf Stream Council.

- **History of Camp Rangers** – the following is a chronology of the different individuals employed by the Council as “caretakers” of our reservation. Their love for scouting, talents, and many skills have made it possible to deliver the beauty of Tanah Keeta to the youth of Gulf Stream Council for over 50 years!
 - 1968 – 1971 – Jack Oldham (first full time Ranger in 1970)
 - 1971 – 1974 – Thomas Beaver
 - 1974 – 1978 – James Williams
 - 1978 – 1979 – Calvin Bailey
 - 1979 – 1984 – James Preston
 - 1984 – 1985 – Chuck Dettman
 - 1985 – 2000 – Gerald Pence
 - 2001 – 2016 – Steve Steinmetz is the current lead Camp Ranger
 - 2008 – 2016 – Harlan Pierce is the current second Camp Ranger

- **Camp Annual NCAP inspections** – the following is an accounting of the results of the annual camp inspections performed by the NCAP (National Camp Accreditation Program) developed by the BSA to insure the camps across the nation were operating by the established standards, and were properly representing the Brand of the BSA. As the records show.....TK has a long tradition of excellence with over 50 years of “A” ratings!
 - 1959 – The camp received a “B” rating at the annual inspection (*first year on record*).
 - 1960 – 1967 – The camp received an “A” rating at the annual inspection.
 - 1968 – The camp received a “B” rating at the annual inspection.
 - 1969 – 1986 – The camp received an “A” rating at the annual inspections.
 - 1987 – The camp received a “B” rating at the annual inspection.
 - 1988 – 2016 – The camp received an “A” rating at the annual inspections.

Acknowledgements:

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