

THE HISTORIC WILDFLOWER TRAIL

April 2020

Foreword

The Native Americans from the Delaware Tribe first occupied the area throughout Marion County. They mainly used this region as summer hunting grounds. Jacob and his son Isaac brought their families from North Carolina, and settled on the property in 1822. Many years later, his decedents lived in the white farmhouse just southeast of the current camp on 21st Street. The first Girl Scout troop in the Central Indiana area was created in Indianapolis, IN, in 1917. The council had established a camp at what is now 75th and College, but it was not large enough for the growing Girl Scout membership. By 1921, the council was interested in the Pugh property. Dorothy Dell, a former Girl Scout, donated the money to buy the camp. The camp was dedicated on July 7, 1926 and the first session opened on July 17th. The camp was laid out by landscape architect Lawrence Sheridan, who had put together Indianapolis' park system carrying out and developing George Kessler's plan. That first summer, 151 eager girls enjoyed living in the woods. The grounds had four tent units, Pugh Cabin, White House, and a large sheep barn.

In April 1986, the Marion County Soil and Water Conservation District put together a self-interpretative guide to the Camp Dellwood nature trail because they thought future generations would depend upon the knowledge and values of present generations. They hoped this trail would play a part in instilling lifelong values of stewardship and love for the land.

THE HISTORIC WILDFLOWER TRAIL SELF-GUIDED TOUR

Follow the wooden placards along the trail and read each entry with your group as you pass. This will earn their Historic Wildflower Trail patch purchased in the Girl Scout Showcase at any local office.

1. Site of the David Varner homestead: This homestead was the farmhouse for the sheep farm on the property. Girl Scouts used it as a bunkhouse and office until 1957 when it was burned down to make way for the ranger's residence. The watershed in this area runs off the Miami and Shoals soil and into the Eagle Creek (aka Dorothy Dell Run inside the camp). Thousands of acres of Marion County are in the Eagle Creek watershed.

2. Site of the White House: In 1934, winter day camp took place for the first time and the white house was used. In 1937 for the first time, spring vacation camping was offered. In 1941, the white house was enlarged. During 1972, the white house had to be torn down. Because of the steep land, erosion happened easily. Due to this fact, the woodland here was never plowed and put into crops. Each year the leaves fall from these trees and enrich the soil. Remember, these trees are crops and if harvested wisely they will produce trees for generations as well as improve the value of the forest for people, wildlife, and the land.
3. The first swimming pool was built, which replaced water fun in Big Eagle Creek in 1929. Booth Tarkington, a famous Indianapolis author, was instrumental in helping to raise the funds. The pool was enlarged and a bath house was built in 1974. The openness of the flagpole area has been cleared of all large trees. Animals, like people, enjoy a change of scenery and many animals will come out of the shadows of the woods to bask in the sunlight and play in the low vegetation.
4. You are now entering the amphitheater. This was the site of the first Sleepy Hollow tent unit. This explains the original name since the girls slept in the hollow. The unit was moved to higher ground because of the drainage of the hillside and possible flooding of the creek. Now the amphitheater is used for skits, singing, and dancing. The tall trees here with smooth, light gray bark are called Beech trees and will grow to be 60-80 feet tall. As a tree begins to die, it is used as a home for woodpeckers, raccoons, squirrels, and other wildlife. This is referred to as a "Den Tree" and like all things in nature, even at death, it has a valuable and important part in the balance of nature.
5. Site of the first shower house and restroom for the Girl Scouts in the nearby units: Take a walk straight back and you will see the walls. This is also a Butterfly Garden created in this particular location due to the abundance of wildflowers. With some possible exceptions, the majority of the wildflowers are native to this area.
6. Site of a farm utility building: Note the plant growth and size of the tree inside the foundation. How could we determine time passing? Look for remaining fence in area.
7. The chalet was the original amphitheater and was built in 1929. It was built by the Gyro Club and enlarged several times over the years. This has become the unit for Daisy campers during day camp. The chalet sits on a large hill above Dorothy Dell Run. Four billion tons of soil is washed into the rivers and lakes of America each year. If you stack that amount on a football field, it would extend 400 miles up into the air.
8. Dorothy Dell Run, this is the section of Eagle Creek that runs through the camp. It is named after Dorothy Dell (Moffett) who purchased the land and donated it to the Girl Scouts. She passed away in 1949. The meandering creek will cut into the hillsides and often cause trees to fall over. As the creek becomes clogged with silt, its capacity to carry away storm water will be reduced, and flooding may occur. There are many ways people can help prevent these problems. The little rock dams you see help control the water and provide shallow pools for fish, ducks, and other wildlife.
9. Mender Cabin was built in 1962. It was used as an infirmary for summer and winter camp. While at this station, take time to concentrate on each sense. Examine at this station the objects around you by shutting your eyes and listening. With your eyes still shut, hold your ears closed and smell. With your eyes closed, have someone place an object in your hand and see if you can identify it.

10. Location of the camp store where girls could purchase postcards, stamps, and toothpaste when Dellwood was a resident camp. Do you hear the gun shots? Those are from a shooting range on the other side of Eagle Creek River.
11. Sycamore Lodge which was a sheep barn for the Varner family. Remodeling turned the barn into a mess hall that was named Sycamore Lodge on July 16, 1927. See the large sycamore trees located near the lodge, thus the name.
12. The Brownie Tree possibly served as a favorite play area for the Varner children around 1849. They also enjoyed playing in a hollow tree and once found a fawn in their playhouse. Could it have been our Brownie Tree? This tree was 18-feet in diameter and estimated to be between 250-300 years old. It was struck by lightning in 2002, during Session #8 of Day Camp, and fell. If you visit the Leadership Center, you can see wood from the tree made into a countertop in front of the Girl Scout Showcase.
13. Walk along the old sidewalk that led from the Sherwood Unit to the walking bridge and "Ye Ole Swimmin' Hole." The walking bridge is still remembered by those who went to resident camp at Dellwood in the 1970's.
14. The Nature Center was located by the archery area. As you see it is no longer there. This nice shaded area is now used for different outdoor programs in the summer.
15. Go up the hill to the right of the path that leads to the former Sherwood Tent Unit. Can you see where the unit house was? There is still the cement foundation and, small as it may be, that is where Girl Scouts would have prepared food, washed dishes, and kept all their cleaning supplies during camp.
16. Old Union Cemetery was part of the original David Varner homestead. The old cemetery has been used by the Pugh Family, its neighbors, and decedents. It is still in use and is owned by the Old Union Cemetery Association.
17. Site of the Pugh Cabin: The cabin had been moved near the cemetery and became a museum to Indiana girls from the early settlement days. It also served as a headquarters for Mrs. Frederick Edey, National Commissioner, when Dellwood hosted a Girl Scout training sessions prior to GSUSA's 16th National Council meeting in downtown Indianapolis in 1930. Lou Henry Hoover, First Lady, visited Indianapolis for the National Convention Meeting. Mrs. Hoover was very active in Girl Scouts before and after her time as First Lady. On August 25, 1972, the "Sandy Clift Memorial" was dedicated at the site of the Pugh Cabin. Sandy Clift had been an active Girl Scout and was a CIT at resident camp in 1972. Senior Girl Scouts cleared the area and made the "retreat."
18. In Pinewood Tent Unit, the pine trees were planted by some of the first Girl Scouts here at Dellwood. They are located directly behind Pinewood Tent Unit, thus the name. If you look carefully you will see that the pine trees were planted in rows. When trees are planted like this, it is called a wind break.
19. The Program Center was built in 1973. Can you see how easily a fire could start in this area from a careless campfire or thoughtless litter bug? The Program Center was remodeled to include a kitchenette in each sleeper wing in 2011.
20. The Math and Science Center was built in 2001. It has a wonderful butterfly garden in one of its outdoor classrooms and the other serves as a platform for a giant telescope that is used to help girls learn about astronomy. This area used to be a small meadow and favorite hunting ground for large birds and fox. If you look carefully you might see a hawk perched high atop a tree waiting to catch its dinner!

21. The Barn, which is now the Ranger's work shed, was once the location of the horse barn when Dellwood was a resident camp. Though the horses are long gone, if you closely you should be able to see a variety of wildflowers.

Remember: Be "responsible for what you say and do" by always leaving a place cleaner than you found it. Please don't pick up things along the trails so the Girl Scouts for many generations may enjoy them too!!!



*Created by: Troop
902 for their
Bronze Award
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Map of Camp Dellwood

