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A Scout Cabin Without Scouts

By Ruth Thomson

Business depressions have come and gone over the years, but the one that started in 1929 is well remembered by many people still living in the area because of its prolonged effect. Several federal agencies were created to help the unemployment problem; most of them designed to be temporary.

One of those agencies, the Civil Works Administration (CWA), had a lasting effect on the Borough of Peapack and Gladstone. The only Scout building erected in this country by CWA funds is still standing on its original site since 1934. Logs were obtained from a CWA project at the borough reservoir property and labor was supplied through a CWA grant.

This unique building, which is 20' x 54' feet with two 10' x 10' feet wings, was designed by County Engineer Oscar Smith, who was an uncle of several residents of the Borough.

Harold Horton, then Scout Master, and Oscar Smith went to Washington, D.C. to get permission to build the cabin with CWA funds. Tom Howard was the CWA carpenter who built it. The building was dedicated on June 9, 1934 by Governor Moore of New Jersey for the use of Troop 57. Mayor Reginald Rives was master of ceremonies of the event and Remsen

Howard, Commander of the Somerset Hills Post of the American Legion, was a featured speaker as the Boy Scout Troop was sponsored by the Post.

According to a local newspaper article, Scout Troops participating in the parade and dedication came from Summit, Westfield, Plainfield, Bound Brook, Somerville, and Bernardsville. The parade was led by the Somerville Legion Drum Corps.

As a "teen-ager" Girl Scout, I well remember going to our troop meetings at the cabin; each patrol had its own room. As there was no heat in the building, it was our job during the cold months to start a roaring fire in the large stone fireplace in the center of the building to make it "somewhat warm" by meeting time.

At one time, the Borough Council considered moving the cabin so a new firehouse could be built on the lot. Fortunately, the new firehouse was built on an empty lot in Gladstone so the cabin is still standing adjacent to our Liberty Park separated by Park Avenue.

Unfortunately, the Borough has a unique Scout cabin, but no Scouts, so the log building sits quiet and empty as a reminder that seventy years ago scouting was an active part of the community.