

GREENWICH COUNCIL ~ BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA ERNEST THOMPSON SETON SCOUT RESERVATION



**50TH ANNIVERSARY
REDEDICATION CEREMONY
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 2ND, 2010**



Greenwich Scouting

celebrates
Fifty Years
of

Scout Camping



THE ERNEST THOMPSON SETON SCOUT RESERVATION

For fifty years, the Ernest Thompson Seton Scout Reservation has provided a place for Scouts and Scouters to revel in the magic of Scouting and behold the beauty of the outdoors. Ernest Thompson Seton resided in Greenwich and served as the Greenwich Council President and later the first Chief Scout of the Boy Scouts of America. He played a key role, along with James E. West and Daniel Carter Beard, in the founding of the Boy Scouts of America. In fact, he co-authored (with Lord Baden-Powell) the first version of the American Boy Scout Handbook.

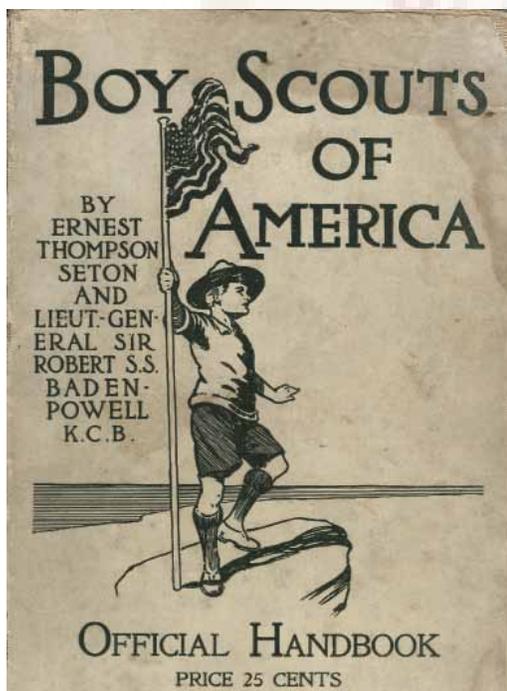
Seton spent his entire life dazzled by the wonders of nature and always in search of adventure. He wrote many books as a naturalist and painted and drew pictures of flora and fauna.

The contagious spirit and fervor that Ernest Thompson Seton brought to his life still lives on today as the Greenwich Council, Boy Scouts of America seeks to make the next 50 years of Seton Scout Reservation as memorable, if not more, than the first.

Willard R. Devaul and Edward H. Anderson, lifelong Greenwich Scouting volunteers, contributed the vast majority of the written history of Seton Scout Reservation that follows. Both of these men also contributed greatly to all of the projects to follow with their time, talents, and treasure.



Ernest Thompson Seton



In 1949 Tom Hillegas was selected as Scout Executive because he had experience in developing and running camps. Willard Devaul was appointed chairman of a committee to hunt for a suitable site. Together they visited existing camps in Massachusetts to see how they were laid out and run. Over the next few years the council had many sites under consideration, including:

- Ten acres on the shore of Lake Zoar in Connecticut (site considered too small)
- The Close property on the north side of John Street (inadequate lake and water supply)
- Tract between North Street and Water Company Reservoir in Greenwich (no water was available)
- Calves Island off Byram Shore (required a boat to transport Scouts... bad in case of an emergency)
- About fifty acres in Ridgefield, Connecticut (lack of water)
- The actual purchased property, then owned by the Greenwich Water Company

This property was originally bought by the Greenwich Water Company for the purpose of constructing a dam and reservoir for additional water supply. When the Merritt Parkway was constructed through the site, it could no longer be used for a reservoir. The Water Company made studies and suggested a \$360,000 price, which was too much for the Scouts. After a period of time the great day for Greenwich Scouting arrived when the Water Company agreed to cut the price to \$180,000 and the Greenwich Council decided to make the purchase. (Willard Devaul gave credit for the price being reduced to Robert Kaufman, manager of the Water Company at the time.)



Prescott Bush, Jr. was appointed chairman of the drive committee and a goal of \$240,000 set to cover cost of land and some needed structures. Although everyone worked hard, only \$102,418.06 was pledged and alternate sources of revenue were needed or the project would be dropped.

At that time there was a shortage of gravel for use as a base for road construction in town. Since the property contained very good gravel at two possible lake sites, the Council received bids from contractors for each cubic yard of gravel and topsoil excavated at the lake sites. The Greenwich Council Board voted to go ahead with the project and the deed was signed on August 28, 1958. We were in business at last. Over the next two years the contractor excavated, and thanks to the lakes, the Ernest Thompson Seton Scout Reservation became a reality!

On the following pages we trace the history and development of the past five decades as Greenwich Scouting celebrates *“Fifty Years of Scout Camping”* at The Ernest Thompson Seton Scout Reservation!

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Thomas W. Hillegas, Scout Executive

Reprinted from the 1959 Camp and Conservation Development Fund information booklet.



On a beautiful sunny day, at a site overlooking Hillegas Lake, the Ernest Thompson Seton Reservation was dedicated on October 2, 1960.

During the 1960's the Seton Scout Reservation saw the following additions and improvements:

- The original Rangers Headquarters was built
- Construction of a well and a sewage disposal system
- Combination toilet and washstands were constructed in Troop Campsites
- The Health Lodge (photo at right) was constructed with funds contributed by Mrs. Robert L. Peterson, the daughter of Dr. William Henry Fry



- The original pool, shower and dressing rooms were constructed
- Storehouse (photo at left) constructed; later turned into the Trading Post, for storage and distribution of food and supplies during summer camping
- An addition was added to the Trading Post to provide a wash room and toilet facilities

- A reinforced concrete bridge (photo at right) across the Byram River was designed to carry a 15-ton load. Precast I-beam slabs manufactured by Blakslee & Co. in New Haven were used
- The first chapel was constructed at a beautiful secluded site in the woods atop a high rock cliff away from camp noises and activity



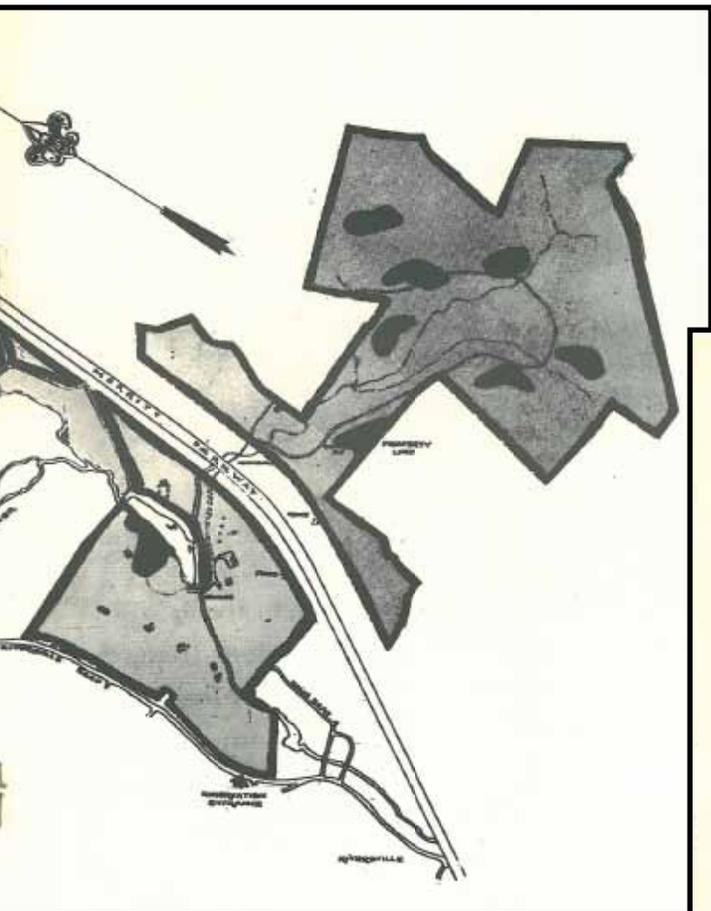
- Work parties of Scouters did landscaping throughout camp
- Boat dock was donated in memory of Eric Feldman, Troop 3

- Area cleared for field sports (photo at right)



Catholic Mass on the Sports Field at a Camporee in 1964.





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Assistant Scout Executive—Herbert H. Duffy



Reprinted from the Dedication Program, October 2nd, 1960



During the 1990's the Seton Scout Reservation saw the following additions and improvements:



- The Fry Lodge (photo at left) was modified from a single usage health lodge to a temporary lodging for the new Campmaster Corps, recently formed to support Camp Seton. The kitchen was modernized and closet space was added



- A steel bridge was installed across the river leading to the pool
- A 400' deep well yielding 20 gpm was dug behind the Lions Lodge, with an all weather hydrant installed
- Improvements and internal modifications were made to the Eleanor and G. Gordon Fisher Lodge (Rangers house, photo at right)
- All trail markers were replaced with newly designed, highly visible discs
- The bridge, in the vicinity of Conservation Lake, was replaced by the Order of the Arrow



- The Lions Lodge was converted into an all seasons building for use as a summer camp headquarters, meeting area or a sleeping facility (photo at left) with easily stored and assembled cots. Modifications included a new kitchen as well as a gas heating system. A substantial canvas cover (photo at right) was installed behind the building to provide an area for use in inclement weather



- A trail map and an orienteering map of Seton (photo below) were developed from current aerial photography. This was the first mapping of Seton for usage by Scouts to enhance their training



- In 1998 the Greenwich Council voluntarily agreed to impose a Declaration of Restrictions and Preservation Easement on the area of Reservation lying west of the Merritt parkway (158 acres). The Restrictions prohibit any future development, other than for Scout or similar activities and programs. This ensures that the 158 acres will remain in essentially its natural condition in perpetuity



2000's



• In 2007 modifications to the Activities Building (photo at left) and the new Ranger house were completed

• In 2008 an 8' bouldering wall (photo at right) was added near the pool



• The Nature Education Center (below center and right) and the Pavilion (left) were completed in June 2008. The Pavilion was made possible through a grant from the Davis Foundation



• **Hillegas Lake was finally dredged!** 13,000 cubic yards of uncontaminated sand, gravel, and mixed organic silt were removed and deposited on sites within Camp Seton



• In 2009 a 43' high Climbing Tower was constructed using funds donated by the Broderick Family (photos at left)

• The Sports Field, recipient of most of the clean fill dredged from the lake, was graded, the BB Range enlarged (photo at right) and an improved .22 rifle range reinstalled



• The Bob Neilsen Building, donated by the Dalio Family in honor of Scoutmaster Bob Neilsen, will be completed in late 2010 and house the Camp office, first aid station, trading post, and Campmaster quarters



GREENWICH COUNCIL ~ BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA

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