

# EARLY DAYS OF MERIWETHER

(Briefed partly from a longer version by Ken Wells, which is available separately)

In the beginning, there was a Fire! It was shortly after midnight on a late August, 1925 evening when suddenly the one and only building at Camp Chinidere burst into flames lighting the night sky above Wahtum Lake high in the Cascades. The campers were roused from their tents and fought the blaze as best they could, but it was too late and the one length of garden hose that constituted the fire protection system melted and gave up the ghost. All that remained of the huge log structure was the great stone chimney with its fire blackened mouth.

The Portland Area Council faced a dilemma. Although the council now had the insurance money (\$6,000) and could have rebuilt the lodge, Obie (G. H. Oberteuffer, Scout Executive) was determined to find a new location. He and the Camp Committee, under the leadership of Aubrey R. Watzek, searched and searched for a better site.

In the winter of 1925, Ernest A. Chamberlain got in touch with Obie, said he wanted to give the Scouts a camp! He had in mind giving about 10 acres, from a tract he inherited from his parents, south of Cape Lookout. They, Mr. and Mrs. Ezra Chamberlain, had homesteaded the original land in 1886, with their children. After negotiation, the council bought 400 acres, for \$19,000 and Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Chamberlain gave an additional 88 acres. This was probably the largest Scout Camp in America at the time. (Mr. and Mrs. Ezra Chamberlain are buried in the hillside below the Chief's Cabin.)

Mr. Watzek gave the money for the down payment, and the \$6,000 insurance money was used to start construction.

With no road into the site, all materials



Chinidere Fire

were hauled up the beach from Sand Lake. In spite of the difficulties, camp opened on June 26, 1926, with four troop sites scattered through the woods (a unique idea for the time) and a dining hall only partially roofed and no seats for the dining tables. First period campers ate standing!

J. B. Miller, an old friend of Obie's, was construction boss, later for many years Camp Ranger.

Food and other operating supplies were brought by freight truck to Hemlock. Everett Allen, a neighbor, picked up the supplies and brought them to his ranch. Our camp horse and wagon picked them up there and brought them into camp.

The four troop sites, Struans, Pirates, Lookouts, and Buryans, were tents on platforms. Originally Scouts washed in the lake or creek, whichever was nearer.

Years before, on Christmas Day, 1890, the ship Struan, a lumber schooner sailing to Australia, wrecked on the beach immediately in front of the meadow. In the early camp days the anchors and some chain were salvaged and in much later years more chain and the windlasses were recovered. These surround the flag pole today.

Named for Meriwether Lewis, his family crest is the camp staff emblem, and the family motto "Vi et Consilio" was a camp honor group for many years. It means "through power and wisdom." The story of the Lewis and Clark expedition was the basis of the historic camp pageant used for many, many years to tell the policies of camp life.

Lake Chamberlain, a warm fresh water lake, has provided excellent aquatic facilities. For many years the (land-locked) S.S. Lion, given by the Portland Lions Club, was the sea  
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Tents and Teepees



1) The Chamberlain Homestead in the meadow - 1893.  
 Mr. and Mrs. Ezra Chamberlain in front.  
 Orlo, Sr. and Ernest behind with one of their wives.  
 Two grandchildren.

2) 1926 Chinidere Staff one week before Lodge burned

3) 1926 Camp Staff

4) E. A. Chamberlain

5) J. B. Miller, First Camp Ranger







## Early Days

scout base at camp.

The first camp hospital, the present boat-house, and many other items were provided by the Portland Rotary Club, a constant and vigorous supporter of Scouting.

The camp was closed in 1941 and 1942 by war scares, and reopened in 1943. Later the provisional system of scouts going as individuals was changed to the charter system, in which year-around Scoutmasters brought their Troop to camp, and an all summer program staff helped them conduct their activities.

In 1952 the old dining hall was retired and the present one built. Camp Clark was built on the north end of the reservation in 1956. The old tent frames were replaced with the present lean-tos or new tents and platforms. Many other old structures disappeared and were replaced by new ones. The Big Lodge still stands, refurbished from time to time and providing cover for many activities.

For the true old timer, the most shocking change occurred in the mid '50s when a road was built to the dining hall! But most Scouts still walked in until recently. Roaring dune buggies have brought civilization to the trail making it difficult if not dangerous to use.



But, however they get in, hundreds of Scouts still camp annually at Meriwether, and get all the thrills and benefits this historic camp has provided for these 50 years. The memories of '26 blend gloriously with those of '36 and '46 and '76 - and will, we know, continue to blend through the years ahead, as this great camp continues making better boys into better men -

There beside the bold Pacific!

With her waves of blue - - -

Hail to thee, Camp Meriwether . . .

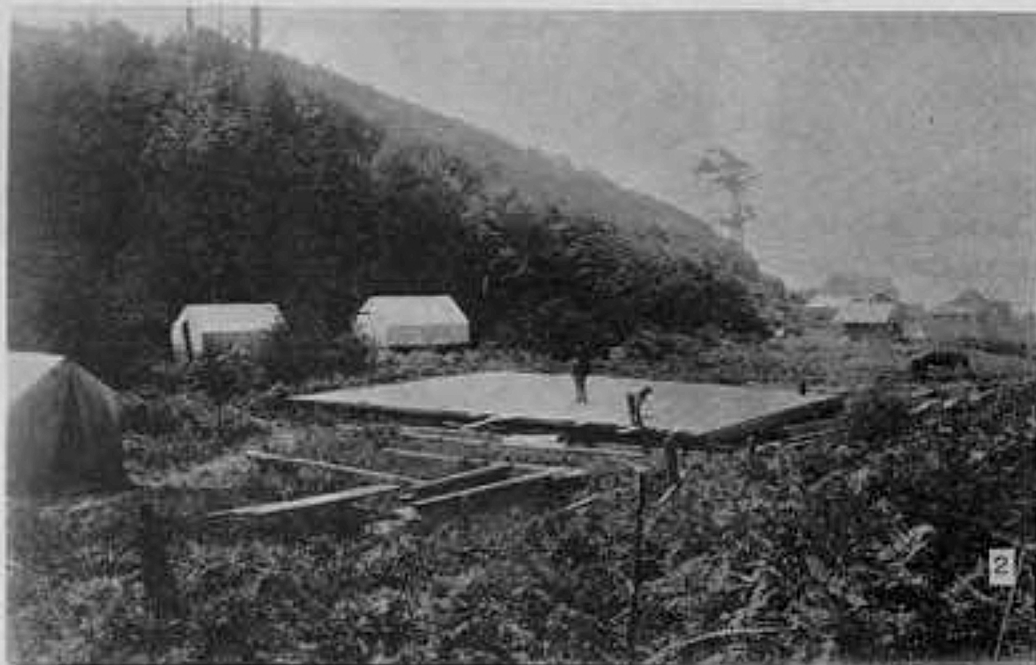
Always keep thy name

Honored after in Life's struggle,

Craftsmen of man's fame.

- 1) Craft Shop in Big Lodge
- 2) Everett "Pop" Royce
- 3) Washing in the creek. Probably about 1926.





#### FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR CAMPING

A special word to those who love Scout Camp!

Things never change! It always takes money to care for things you value! If you want to help care for Merivether and our Scout camps, there are three easy ways you can (as well as other ways, too):

- 1) A direct gift earmarked for "Camp Merivether"
- 2) A gift to our Camp Maintenance Trust Fund." Only the income can be used.
- 3) A bequest to the council earmarked, if you prefer, as in the first two choices. Contact Guy Miller, Bruce Winston or Don Kopet if you have any questions.

- 1) The Little Sahara
- 3) Executive Board Members at Dedication:  
Left to Right: C. C. Colt, Unknown, Homer D. Angell, Frank Kerr, Aubrey Watzek, and Eddie Sammons.

- 2) Dining Hall Under Construction, May 1926.

- 4) Obie
- 5) Bunyon Cabins
- 6) Rover Bunk House







7) Carl Moline  
 8) Al Soderberg and the nature class  
 9) Struans

10) 1926 Council Camping Committee, front row left to right: Ernie Welch, Maurie Dunne, Obie, Frank Kerr. Back row: Rod Glisan, unknown, A.R. Watzek, Dick Grace, Roy Conway, unknown, Gene Dowling.

11) Obie and his Scout troop.



TRIBUTES TO HISTORIC FIGURES  
IN MERIWETHER'S FIRST 50 YEARS

Hundreds if not thousands of persons have made innumerable contributions to Camp Meriwether. Great appreciation is expressed to all of them. We particularly honor today the following and in so doing - honor all.

The Chamberlain Family - Mr. and Mrs. Ezra Chamberlain and their sons, Orlo, Sr., and Ernest homesteaded this land in 1886. Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Chamberlain sold the council 400 acres and gave an additional 88 acres in 1926, marking the start of Camp Meriwether. They are represented here today by the Ezra Chamberlain's grand children, Mr. Orlo R. Chamberlain, Jr. of Rye, New York and Mrs. Ida Chamberlain Warbington, Hoquiam, Washington.

Aubrey R. Watzek, 1926 Council Camping Chairman - He shared in the enthusiasm for this beautiful site and gave a generous gift which made the original purchase possible. He continued to give leadership for many years, later giving key gifts which made possible our great Service Center and Nanitch Point Lodge on Mt. Hood. He is represented here today by Vittz-James Ramsdell, past Council President, who worked closely with Mr. Watzek in later years.

The Portland Rotary Club gave the money to build the first camp hospital, the present boat-house at Lake Chamberlain, as well as financial support for many other council properties and functions. In honoring the Portland Rotary Club, we also honor the Portland Lions Club which built the Sea Scout Ship "Lion" on the shores of Lake Chamberlain in 1929, and the many other service clubs which support Scouting. The Portland Rotary is represented here today by Robert Kupfer.

G. H. Oberteuffer, "Obie", had the dream of a great new concept of Scout camping in which troops were moved out from "camping streets" into sites spread over hundreds of acres of woods and, through his talent and vision, caused others to join in creating this magnificent camp. By his leadership, for 18 years outstanding young men were brought together as the camp staff, and through them establishing the tradition and spirit which have marked Meriwether throughout the 50 years. Thousands of men throughout America pay tribute to Meriwether and the impact it has had on their development. They and we thank Obie for having so well shaped and launched this Scout camp.

THE MERIWETHER CAMP DIRECTORS

Following in Obie's footsteps, a select group of men has had the unique experience of being the Meriwether Director. Since the development of Camp Clark on the reservation's northend, there has been also a Meriwether Scout Reservation Director. Each has carried on the fine traditions he inherited, maintained the high standards of program and administration, and added, as appropriate, those modern touches that changing times require.

We salute these men:

1926-1944*	G. H. Oberteuffer	1966-1967	Bill Scarth
1945	Jim Monroe and Al Soderberg	1968	Jim Phillips
1946-1947	Guy P. Miller	1969**	Scarth/Phillips
1948-1950	Ross Taylor	1970	Don Chilcote/Lance Margeson
1951-1957	P. Beryl Morris	1971	Chilcote/Larry Watson
1958	Robert Bugge	1972	Jim Watson/Jim Garlock
1959	Dick I. Whitney	1973	Pat Murphy
1960	Bob Burnett	1974	Bob Fisher/Thor Sabo
1961-1964	Jack Jensen	1975	Foster/Eric Larsen
1965	Blaine Kuhn	1976	Mert Matthewson/John Foster

\*Closed 1941-1942

\*\*Start of Reservation Director





Left to right:  
Don Earl  
Ken Ackles  
Len Hammersley  
Jim Burdett



Left to right:  
Ted Smith  
Bill Johnson  
Lloyd Lillie  
Ken Livingston



Building of  
Ft. Clatsop  
(Scene from pageant  
during early days)



- 1) Camp Staff?
- 2) Lewis & Clark Expedition "extras"
- 3) Lloyd Lillie and Don Earl
- 4) Obie conducting church service







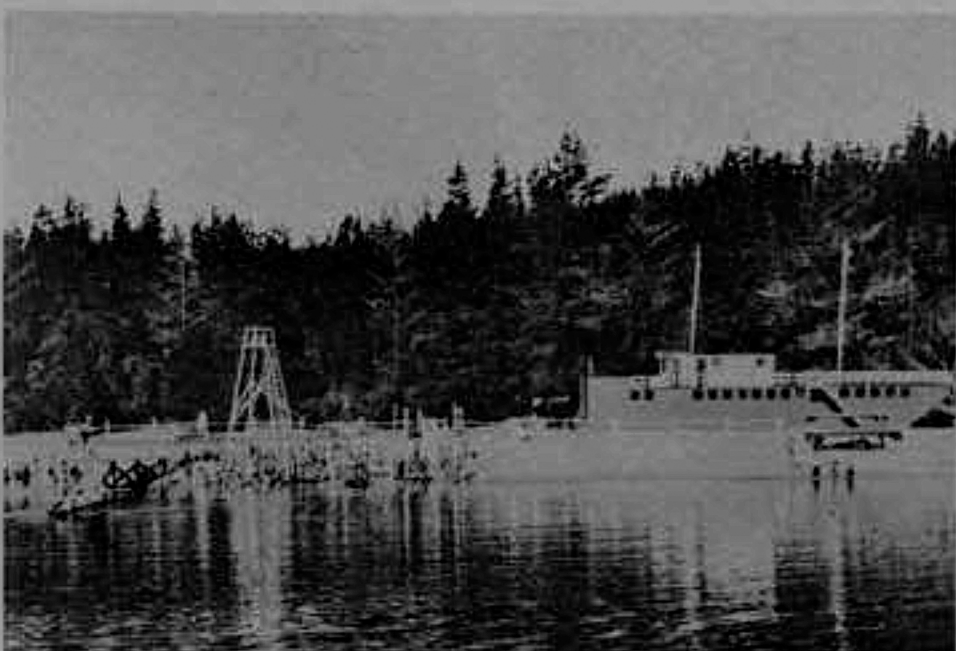
Growth of  
Lake Chamberlain  
Swimming and boating  
Facilities!

(Upper) Only the Lake!



(Middle) Some Dock!  
(First Year)

(Bottom) S.S. LION  
Guard Tower  
and Row Boats



Today

The LION is gone --

but

dozens of

Rowboats and Canoes

plus

hundreds of

Swimmers

fill this great

warm, fresh water lake!

MERIWETHER ANTHEM

There beside the bold Pacific with her  
waves of blue  
Stands our own Camp Meriwether, Glory  
be to you.  
Cheer her fellows, Cheer her onward.  
Pride her name so dear.  
Hail to thee, Camp Meriwether,  
Sing her praises here.

Tenderfoot she taught and guided,  
Eagle Scout her goal,  
Mother of a Scout's new manhood,  
Builder of his soul.  
Pledge we ever, Pledge we holy  
Always keep thy name.  
Honored after in Life's struggle,  
Craftsman of man's fame.

Gathered are we here together,  
Scouts and scouters, too.  
To pay homage on your birthday,  
Our own camp so true.  
As God blest us, may we serve you  
Many years from now.  
Hail to thee Camp Meriwether  
As we make this vow.

(The first two stanzas were written by Doc Green during the early days of Camp Meriwether. The last stanza was prepared in 1976 by Ken Ackles.)

\* \* \* \* \*

Our thanks to the following Scouters who formed the committee which prepared and presented this 50th Anniversary Program for Camp Meriwether:

Dr. Charles Littlehales, Chairman  
R. Burke Morden, Vice Chairman  
Robert Barnes, Vice Chairman  
George Alexander  
Dean Becker  
Allan de Lay  
Al Davis  
Bob Falkenhagen  
Warren Gilfillan  
Webb Goetze  
Raymond P. Heady

Robert Kupfer  
Frank Lockyear  
Art Markewitz  
G. H. Oberteuffer  
Dick Olcott  
Bob Parthemer  
Barbara Peeples  
Everett "Pop" Royce  
Mack Sutter  
Bob Warner

And to the professional staff and 1976 Camp Meriwether staff who gave their total support to its success.

