

## Camp Pocono 1920 - 1969

Not many people know of Camp Pocono, the summer camp for boys that operated on the shore of Lake Wallenpaupack. Camp Pocono began on Lake Naomi in 1920, then moved to fifty acres on a lakeshore in Tobyhanna from 1921 through 1927 before settling in its permanent location on Wallenpaupack from 1928 through 1969. The Wallenpaupack location used to be where Lakeview Court, Woodland Drive, Forest Drive and Evergreen Drive, among others, are today in Lakeville, Wayne County. Aside from a tennis court originally built for Camp Pocono which is today a remodeled, modern tennis court in the Woodland Hills private community, nothing else remains of the camp.

Former camper Dr William Stouch traveled from Vermont to Wallenpaupack in 2013 to see if any preserved history of Camp Pocono. When finding no mention of the camp, Dr Stouch contacted Wallenpaupack Historical Society. Dr Stouch's enquiry was turned over to Bernadine Lennon who spoke to him and another Camp Pocono alum Jay Stevens. Through Dr Stouch's initial enquiry, Bernadine has acquired from Dr Stouch and Mr Stevens a display of camp artifacts, photographs, a written memoir of essays entitled *Pocono Remembered*, and an oral history of the camp.

Other former campers include both sons of WHS member Dr William Dewar, whose sons would travel to camp by boat at the beginning of each season.

Thank you to Dr William Stouch, who provided the oral history for this article - from a series of interviews with Dr Stouch, edited by Kristen Brown.

"Chauncey 'Chum' Paxson was an educator. He and his wife Dorothy (Dottie) lived in Bucks County. His mother had a girls' camp named 'Camp Owaissa' at Lake Naomi and Chum was interested in starting a private boys camp. Early on, he had to make a decision as to whether he wanted to teach or operate a boys' camp. He did both for a while. In 1928 he moved Camp Pocono to Lake Wallenpaupack. In 1927, the main lodge of Camp Pocono was built and was to be the main focus of the camp. It also served as the dining hall. Chum and some of his associates built the lodge, cutting the logs themselves. Chum and Dottie incorporated Camp Pocono in 1956 for the purpose of conducting a summer camp for educational purposes.

"Camp Pocono was a private boys camp operated by a Quaker couple in their tradition, welcoming people of all backgrounds. There were Roman Catholic and Jewish campers. Catholic counselors could attend local church service on Sundays if they didn't want to participate in Sunday discussions. Outside their tent on Sundays, the Paxsons would hold a Quaker meeting for those who wanted to attend.

"The camp was integrated and upheld the Quaker tolerance for everybody and for different ideas. All aspects of camping were taught. Overnight and longer camping trips (both with canoes and hiking) were offered. The uniqueness of the camp's location, staff and campers made it very special. Camp Pocono was referred to as a 'woody' camp.

"Chum made rounds in the winter to the homes of potential campers and various colleges on the East Coast for camp counselors. He had his contacts and set up quite a network over 50 years. He wouldn't just accept anyone who would pay \$300 or so to send their son to the camp. He enlisted counselors, former campers and others who understood the camp's philosophy to interview prospective campers and their parents.

"The camp had between 90 and 110 campers. There were 4 age groups: Cub Camp (ages 6 - 8), Colt Camp (ages 9-10), Buck Camp (11-12) and Eagle Camp (ages 13-15). Campers stayed for a month to eight weeks each summer with some returning as camp counselors as they grew older.

Uncle Ditta cabin



John Funk + Al Staley

Uncle Ditta Boat



Uncle James cabin.



"The Quakers had a lot of contacts in Bucks County. A number of the counselors were on the teaching staff of the Quaker schools outside of Philadelphia. Pearl Buck (a famous Quaker author) adopted a number of boys and at least one of them attended Camp Pocono.

"A lot of the people who attended Camp Pocono as counselors were physicians and educators. Chum and Dottie believed in tolerance of all religions and backgrounds in the Quaker tradition. Even in the 1940s and early 1950s, there was some integration with African-American counselors and campers. It was very unusual for that time period.

"Jorge Bolet was a Cuban born American professional pianist and was the godfather to Chum Paxson's twin boys. He was an early 'scholarship' camper and became a counselor for many years. He took the summers off from touring and arrived in his car towing a trailer with his Baldwin piano which was placed in the lodge. He held piano concerts frequently which were a fantastic experience for the young campers and staff.

*[Note: Jorge Bolet (1914 - 1990) was a Cuban-born American pianist and professor of music. A child prodigy at the age of 12, he was awarded a scholarship to the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia and at 16 appeared as a soloist with the Curtis Symphony Orchestra at Carnegie Hall. He performed with all the major European and American orchestras and toured extensively throughout the world. He is particularly well-known for his performances and recordings of works by Chopin and Liszt. He served as professor of music at the Indiana University School of Music in Bloomington (1968 - 1977) and beginning in 1977, he was the Head of the Piano Department at the Curtis Institute.]*

"Ralph Bunche was the first American diplomat to the United Nations and his son, Ralph, Jr, was a camper. The young campers had the unusual opportunity to sit around the campfire in this rustic setting discussing world affairs with him. Another visitor who spoke with the boys was author James Michener.

*[Note: Ralph J. Bunche (1903 - 1971) was an American political scientist and academic diplomat. He graduated summa cum laude from the University of California as class valedictorian in 1927 and, in 1934, received his Ph.D. in political science from Harvard University. During World War II, he worked for the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the predecessor of the Central Intelligence Agency. After the war, he served in the State Department. He received the 1950 Nobel Peace Prize for his late 1940s mediation in Palestine. He was the first African American and person of color to be so honored in the history of the prize. He was involved in the formation and administration of the United Nations and, in 1963, was*

*awarded the Medal of Freedom by President John Kennedy.]*

"Chum and Dottie Paxson had twin sons, Ted and Chip, who became doctors. Ted was a pediatrician had a practice in Vermont and has since passed away. Chip practiced medicine in Seattle, Washington and still lives there. Because many of his sons' friends were in medical school, Chum would recruit the medical students as well as doctors who had summers off to be on the camp's staff. A number of them were teachers at the Quaker Friends Schools near Philadelphia. All the staff were called 'Uncle' or 'Aunt'. The Paxsons chose to use the more moderate form of address as first names were too informal and 'Mr' or 'Mrs' were too formal.

"The symbol for Camp Pocono was a compass circle with two Indian stick figures in the center. The stick figures represented Chum's sons.

"Camp Pocono was a very rustic camp. It took : while before there was electricity in the main lodge. By 1946, there was electricity but not in any of the tents or craft cabins. Kerosene lamps were lit at night. The whole camp was composed of tents set on raised wooden platforms and with open, lean-to cabins. Each unit had one counselor to four campers.

"Campers ate general camp food. Nothing special. Dottie Paxson oversaw the kitchen. They hire kitchen staff - a female dietician in residence all summer and two African-American cooks, Wally and Gus. They were there every summer. Everyone ate at one time in the dining room located in the main lodge. It was a large building to hold all the campers. All age groups ate together and table seating changed every week. Two nurses lived in the camp infirmary which was located on a hill.

"There was a very woody, pine smell to the camp because of its setting in the forest. A gong was mounted outside the main lodge. It was a huge round metal saw about 4 or 5 feet in diameter. The gong was sounded to note when to get up in the morning, when come to breakfast and when activities began.

"The daily routine was very structured: three meals a day and campfires most every evening. In the morning and afternoon, there were two activity periods which were maybe an hour each that were announced by the ringing of the gong. There was always swimming.

"The day would start at about 7AM, depending on the age group. Bedtime would vary but would usually be preceded by campfires at night. There would be little campfires in front of the tents with campers and counselors sitting around at the end of the evening and talking.

"Counselors were there for about 10 weeks because they spent a week prior to camp setting up the camp and a week after the camping season, putting things away. The Paxsons then returned to their home

in Bucks County. During the summer, the Paxsons lived in a tent.

"In addition to camping out of the area, the campers and staff occasionally had square dances with one of the local girls' camps. In the old days, White Beauty View on the Pike County side of the lake had a drive-in movie theater. Counselors would paddle in a canoe down there, sit on the benches, watch the movie and paddle back to camp. Canoeing was a large part of the camp experience.

"There was a little rifle range above the tennis courts and staff taught the campers to shoot the .22 rifle. Archery was headed by Tom 'T' Wood. Campers also had the opportunity to play volleyball, basketball as well as swim, sail and learn woodcrafts.

"The main focus was always on camping skills. In those days, Lake Wallenpaupack was very wild. The campers had a number of camping sites they could go to not too far away because there were no other private camps, developments or motorboats. They practically had the lake to themselves. A few cabins could be seen from their canoes but it was primarily wooded.

"Every Saturday night as part of the camp ritual, Chum would dress up as an Indian chief and Indian dances were performed. The campers wrapped themselves in blankets and quietly hiked up the mountainside to a big campfire. Chum and Dottie sat at the foot of the totem pole that they had carved

themselves. At the top of the pole was a carved eagle with outstretched wings. That was a big part of Camp Pocono. They would give out awards and someone would make a speech.

"There were one or two seasons when the lake level went down so low the cut tree stumps from when the lake was created could be seen. They were in the cove where the camp was located.

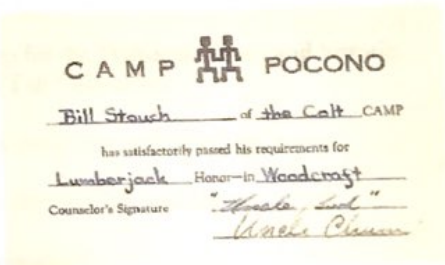
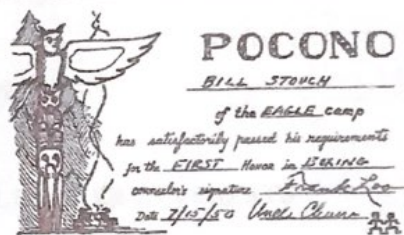
"The 50th anniversary reunion for Camp Pocono was around Labor Day in September of 1969 which marked the end of the camp. The problem was that Chum could not find someone to purchase the camp and operate it as Camp Pocono had been. It was somewhat of a financial decision. Chum and Dottie kept a portion of the land for themselves and sold the rest to a developer. They lived their remaining years in Kennett Square, Pennsylvania. Chum passed away in 1983 and Dottie in 1995.

Camp Pocono Song:

I'm a nut, you are a nut, nothing but a Poconut,  
Once you are a Poconut, you are nuts for life,  
Hickory, chicory, elm or spruce,  
You can always tell a Poconut by the screw that's loose."



August 1952 - Chum Paxson with Training Counselors



1952 Staff Members



1948 Camp Pocono Buck Campers and Counselors

