



From left to right: Commissioner Frank F. Gray, Scout Rupert De A. Hughes, Assistant Scout Master Howard H. Utter, and Scout Master Theodore T. Dorman.

Montclair's Legacy in Bergen County

CONTRIBUTED BY JANE MITCHELL ELIASOF,
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TUCKED AWAY IN A CORNER of Bergen County, there's an idyllic slice of land with deep ties to Montclair. Camp Glen Grey, located in Mahwah, NJ, opened 100 years ago this summer, as a permanent camp for area Boy Scouts. The camp is named after Montclair resident Frank Fellows Gray, who had travelled to Scotland in the first decade of the 20th century and met Lord Robert Baden-Powell, the founder of the Boy Scouts. Baden-Powell, a former military officer, had conceived the Boy Scouts as a way to help boys develop character, strength, leadership, and outdoor skills.

Gray, a former military academy instructor, wanted to emulate Baden-Powell's program in America. He returned to Montclair, and in 1909 organized a troop with boys from Nishuane School (then known as Cedar Street School). That troop predated the national Boy Scout organization's charter in America by one year. Baden-Powell visited America shortly thereafter and honored the Montclair troop by designating it "The Baden-Powell Troop," the only one in the United States. When the troop registered with the national organization, it became Troop #4, a troop that has recently been resurrected and revitalized under the direction of Montclair resident Maureen Edelsen.

In the early years, the Scouts would camp locally. "There are photographs of them camping at Brookdale and Edgemont Park," says Montclair resident Nancy Army Pi-Sunyer, the unofficial historian of Camp Glen Grey. "By 1916, there were enough scouts it was decided it was time to have an official Boy Scout camp."

The Camp Search Committee reads like a list of Who's Who in early 20th century Montclair names: Frank Fellows Gray, Howard Van Vleck (architect), Walter Kidde (engineer), Arthur Miller (engineer), Frank H. Vreeland (architect), Theodore T. Dorman (stock trader), Arthur P. Heyer (town commissioner, car company owner), Phillip Goodell (attorney), and Frank Hughes (real estate company owner).

They found 700 beautiful acres in the Ramapo Mountains

with a brook that could be dammed to form a lake. According to Pi-Sunyer, it was also chosen because it was relatively close to Montclair and accessible by both automobile (think of the cars they would have taken up there!) and train – if the boys were willing to hike the seven miles from the train station to camp.

Camp Glen Gray, named after Frank Gray, was officially dedicated on May 19, 1917. As part of the ceremony, the Scouts and their families brought axes to clear the area where the lake would be formed. "They were required to bring rocks (at least the size of their head)," says Pi-Sunyer. "These rocks formed the core of the dam."

Over the next few years, the Kidde-Miller Dam was constructed to form Lake Vreeland and the Scouts built log cabins, lean-to's, and tent platforms. Since then, generations of Boy Scouts from Montclair and elsewhere

in New Jersey have camped there.

In 2002, The Friends of Glen Gray, Inc., formed to successfully save "The Glen" from developers. Today, thanks to their efforts, Boy Scouts can still camp there to develop character, strength, leadership, and outdoor skills. Now, the general public can hike and camp there, too. Reservations are required for overnight camping and can be made on their website, glengray.org.

Last month, on the weekend of June 23, Boy Scouts, families, and friends of Camp Glen Gray gathered to celebrate the camp's centennial. Special thanks to Nancy Army Pi-Sunyer for sharing her research on Camp Glen Gray. ■

Cedar Grove Historical Society operates a 14-acre historic site, Morgan Farm and Museum, at 903 Pompton Avenue, Cedar Grove. Visitors are welcome to shop their farm stand or tour the museum on Saturdays 10 a.m to 1 p.m from the last Saturday in May to the last Saturday in October.

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