

Newsletter237

## Keith's Corner/McGill News

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### Thanksgiving—Time For Thanks

November is one of the months that celebrates and gives thanks to those Americans that built and fought for, this great country.

These Americans are revered in many books about our history. I think a group of Americans that are overlooked are the ones that established and built our wonderful picnic and camping areas in the various forests across the US. They are very seldom mentioned. So, I feel it is time to say thanks to them.



Photo is from MaryAnn Cottrell O'Donnel. Her father, Dale, is standing behind the left arm of the leader. James Reed's father, James, is second from right on back row and James' uncle, Bob Ainsworth is 3<sup>rd</sup> from the right in the 3<sup>rd</sup> row. Anybody know any of the others??



This is the CCC camp at Berry Creek.

These men worked very hard at making trails and picnic areas for future generations to enjoy. They did their job without scarring the natural landscape like the US Forest Service does now, with their cement pads, motorized trails.

I plan to do an article on Duck Valley soon, but for now, I want to salute and thank the CCC men for all the work they did, which has led to many fond memories of hiking, camping and picnicking for millions of Americans.

My favorite spot was Timber Creek. A lot of us McGill heathens spent many days and nights camping near that stream.

After some parents dropped us off at our favorite campsite, they admonished us to be careful and then left us there for several days.

The CCC campgrounds were small areas cleared of brush, not too close to the stream. A fire pit was in the middle. A CCC built camp stove, with a chimney was perched on a beautiful natural rock/mortar foundation and a large CCC built picnic table for eight people was nearby.

We quickly set up our tent, put our eating utensils on the table set the old iron skillet on the CCC built camp stove, gathered a supply of firewood, built a small dam on the edge of the creek for our cold stuff and then got down to the serious stuff-getting set to go fishing. First, we grabbed an Army surplus entrenching tool or to you civilian types-a small shovel. We had several special places to find

those big earthworms that the trout loved. When our Prince Albert cans were full of worms, we carefully smoothed over our diggings, so the dirt didn't dry out, which would wreck the area for months. We were Boy Scouts and were taught to respect and preserve our forest lands.

Some of us fished upstream and some went downstream. We used the CCC built bridges to cross over the creek. We followed the CCC cleared trails to our favorite "fishin holes". We all had special "holes" that we liked. I remember one such hole that was formed when a tall fir tree died and fell over. The water flowed under the bank by the root ball. It was hard to get your worm into and harder to get a fish out of. I caught some nice 12 inch Rainbows under that bank.

Surprising to most people is the fact that we got so thirsty while fishing. Our minds were on the fish, not our thirst. But, no matter, we could kneel down anywhere and get a drink of that ice cold crystal clear mountain spring water.

Getting back to camp in the late afternoon, we cleaned the fish, wrapped them in tin foil with some REAL butter, salt and pepper, lemon slices and a dash of parsley. Potatoes and onions were peeled and thick sliced, with our trusty Boy Scout knives. A fire was built in the CCC built stove and soon the black cast iron skillet was ready. A big dab of Crisco lard was melted, then our potato and onion slices were put in the 'craclin' hot Crisco, along with generous amounts of alt and pepper. The aroma would heighten our appetite. This is the ultimate way to cook spuds in the wild.

The tin foil wrapped fresh trout were put in the hot coals of the campfire to slowly cook to perfection. A pot of "on the trail coffee" was brewing on the stove. Yes, we put a dash of salt in the mix and placed a small green stick over the open pot to keep it from boiling over.

We were soon sitting at a CCC built camp table enjoying a fresh trout dinner. A loaf of homemade bread from someone's mom was sliced and REAL butter applied. What a meal. It is hard to convey the feelings of those moments.

By comparison I can't remember a truly great meal of fried potatoes cooked in vegetable oil, homemade bread with margarine or other fake stuff or fish laced with margarine.

As soon as the meal was over, we washed the dishes, put things away and then filled the Coleman lanterns, added logs to the campfire.

Now it was time to stand around the fire and tell stories. Someone would break out some homemade oatmeal cookies for a snack. The cracking of the fire, the bubbling chatter of the creek. The clean scent of pine and quakies filled our lungs. The sky was filled with stars. The milky way was easily seen.

All of these sights, sounds and scents along with the companionship of fellow scouts is hard to describe, but can easily be remembered for a lifetime.

We crawled into our sleeping bags and were soon lulled to a peaceful sleep by the creek and the whisper of the large pines.

All of this, thanks to our brave military and the CCC.



Happy Thanksgiving To Everyone

