

November 8th-10th, 2013

Reported by Tommy Garback, Troop Historian

Weekend Gettysburg Trip

This weekend, the troop headed out for Gettysburg at 8:00 a.m. in a group made of 14 youths and 10 adults. Our destination: *The Artillery Ridge Campground and National Riding Stables*. The site for our trip, Gettysburg, was a battle that acted as a main turning point during the Civil War. On these grounds were the lost lives, scenes of injury, capture or disappearance of over 51,000 men. This Union Victory was also the setting of Abraham Lincoln's famous Gettysburg Address.

It was nearly midnight by the time we had finished our long car ride, so the majority of scouts and adults quickly headed off to sleep after setting up tarps and tents. Our campsite was located in Area 213, a little nook at the edge of the long line of campsites in the massive field at *The Artillery Ridge*. We were across the path of a thin row of bare trees, separating the campground from a large and grassy field that led to heavy woods sitting beneath the distant mountains.

At 7 a.m. the next morning, we prepared over twenty-five pancakes and a full pot of sausage and bacon, which were all prepared on griddles over a gas stove. Everyone savored the warm meal in the crisp and sharp wind of the wintry morning air. After hastily cleaning the dishes, the group separated into the cars and drove to the *Gettysburg National Military Park Visitor Center*. From there, we left on a trail that would take us over the rolling hills of battles from many years passed. Defense borders of stacked wood lined the open grounds where various monuments and landmarks of a count over 14,000 sat, casting their ghost of war in the shadows that spread in front of us. The troop hiked about 2-3 miles until we

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reached the Devil's Den around noon for lunch. This landmark is a large hill of round and split boulders piled on top of each other. It served as one of the few Confederate Victory sights on the second day in the Battle at Gettysburg. Soldiers would crawl into the cracks, crevices, tunnels and hidden, narrow holes in between the boulders for secretive aiming and firing of arms. Most of the youths searched through these closed-in tunnels. After we were done lunch, the troop hiked up to Little Round Top, another landmark in the battle. From atop this, you could see the scope of vast fields, streets, hills, monuments and trees in a panoramic view. After the sights, we headed back to our cars, stopping along the way for readings about the landmarks in the fields.

When we were back at camp, macaroni pasta and sauce with onions and peppers was prepared, which we would eat after mass. From 5:30 to 6:30, the troop attended church. Then, back at the campground, we cooked ground beef to add to our pasta and sauce. Dinner in the low sunset grew cold, and cleaning dishes passed the day into darkness. Later on, because of the Trading Post being closed (earlier than scheduled, might I add), everyone shared pastries and donuts. After the long day, scouts and adults went to bed in the bitter night around ten o'clock.

Six forty-five on Sunday, the group woke, took down the tents, and loaded them into the cars. For breakfast, we ate eggs with ham, Pop Tarts, bread, milk and orange Juice. After that, the 24 of us rode for *The Gettysburg Visitor Center and Museum*. When we arrived, the troop watched a very moving film on the Battle at Gettysburg and viewed the Gettysburg

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Cyclorama, a panoramic painting around a center point, which was painted by Paul Philippoteaux and showed Pickett's Charge, a Confederate attack against the Union on July 3, 1863. The length of the incredibly large painting amazed us with its fine detail and description of story-telling. Afterwards, we walked through the museum and discovered facts and details involving the Civil War. For many, it was a chance to reflect with the day before, and realize the history behind what was viewed on Saturday. When everyone was done, the group looked at the gift shop, which held books, flags, souvenirs, and other neat items relating to Gettysburg. From there, we all headed onto the road for home. On the way, we stopped at Steak N' Shake, which had burgers, fries and milkshakes. Close to three o'clock in the afternoon, when our cars were back at Saint Bede's, the trip had concluded.