

# The History of Camp Hi-Sierra

Santa Clara County Council  
Boy Scouts of America

## pre-camp to 1949 to 1999

*as told by Ed Sheldon*

**Prelude: This rambling history of Camp Hi-Sierra was compiled during the summer of 1999, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the camp, from listening to people over the course of the summer reminisce about “when they were a boy”. There is a tendency for people, time and places to run together over the memories of their years, and so it is with this history which is not in exact chronological order but rather as remembered and told. Perhaps that is the way it should be.**

The Miwok Indians: For generations past, prior to the 1840's, native Americans, whom we now identify as the Miwok (alternate: Mi-wuk) Indians occupied the area where camp is now located. This was a distinct tribe, different from other California tribes such as the Diggers and the Yahi. They inhabited an area extending from Yosemite Valley north through the branches of the Tuolumne river system and the Stanislaus river, and West to the Point Reyes area North of San Francisco.

The North Fork of the Tuolumne was a favorite haunt of the Miwoks, and many remaining artifacts testify to the generations they spent along the banks of that river. Many grinding holes exist in the rocks, where they ground acorns and pine nuts for food. A few may be seen in camp today, just below the Dining Hall. Many primitive tools and arrowheads can still be found. Obsidian arrowheads are testimonials of trading with other tribes as far away as Oregon.

The 49ers: With the rush for gold, discovered in the Sierra foothills in 1848, prospectors clamored to California in the mid-1800's. Life rapidly changed for the Miwoks. They felt the pressure and encroachment of thousands of people previously little known to them, and were forced to retreat from much of the territory that previously was their home. People from everywhere laid claim to the land. Many occupations and businesses sprang up almost overnight. New towns flourished, and roads came into being. Farms were cultivated and logging operations and mills came into being. All of this was foreign to the Miwoks, and many died from introduced diseases. Some adapted and were assimilated into the new population to a greater or lesser extent. Many were moved to designated territory called reservations, away from their ancestral homelands. At one time an estimated 29,000 Miwoks inhabited California. Today only about 300 remain.

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Ed Jenness: In the ensuing years, the area became what is often referred to as “settled”, considering the mountainous terrain. A gentleman named Edward Jenness homesteaded and purchased vast tracks of land, including the land along the North Fork of the Tuolumne River, which he acquired in 1879. Ed Jenness grew up in the area from age 16, and lived near Sonora. Those travelling the area today will see the Jenness road just East of Sonora. From owning virtually nothing, he became a prosperous man.

Sonora Logging Co: Ed Jenness leased the site that is now Camp Hi-Sierra to the Sonora Logging Company in 1903, and the area was logged until 1912. A sawmill, named Brown Mill, was set-up on site. More than 600 people worked for the company. Logging occurred until the land was denuded of prime timber. Prized timber included some Douglas fir, as well as Ponderosa, Jeffery and Sugar pine, and some Black oak. In those days, cutting was selective and considerable lesser timber remained. Incense cedar and White fir cover much of the area today. A large Douglas fir, with a loading boom cut into it’s side, remains from the logging operation. Other minor cutting of timber has occurred several times in more recent years, including some cutting during Camp Hi-Sierra years. Logging significantly changed the character of the land, and its effect is still felt nearly a century later. A vast sawdust pile was created by the operation of Brown Mill in back of what is now the archery range. Remnants of the mill still exist, and skid roads can be seen going up the mountainsides. In the early days of Camp Hi-Sierra, the sawdust pile was off-limits to Scouts who could fall through holes in the rotting sawdust. For over two decades, sawdust was wheel-barreled out to reduce dust on the camp trails.

There once was a small cabin up above the present Health Lodge, alongside what is now known as Scout Creek. This cabin was said to have been the superintendent’s cabin from the Mill days. Reportedly, Ed Jenness lived there over the winter of 1913 with his first bride, and referred to the time as one of the happiest years of his life.

Search for BSA camp property: After World War II, the Santa Clara County Council started a search for new camp property. Under the direction of Bob Kirkwood, the camping chairman, forty-three pieces of property were visited looking for a site for a new camp during 1946 and 1947. Chet Bartlett, the Scout Executive, took a real interest in the effort and was extremely supportive. Eric Thorsen, a Scouter, knew the area and helped arrange contacts. Another Scouter, Ken Robison became friendly with Ed Jenness, and the search soon focused on the North Fork of the Tuolumne property.

Purchase of CHS: Under the invitation of the Jenness’, some Scouts from the Council used the property for an encampment in 1948. In 1949, through Ken Robison and Bob Kirkwood,

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arrangements were made to purchase 100 acres for a new Scout camp. Ed Jenness accepted the goodly sum of \$10 in payment for the new camp. Ed offered to sell another 300 acres, but it was felt at the time that 100 acres was adequate. So, in 1949, the acreage became Camp Hi-Sierra, owned by Santa Clara County Council, BSA.

Camp Development: The rush to develop the camp into a full-fledged Scout camp was on. The early 1950's were a period of building and expanding to occupy the land. During the first 2 years, a small cook shack was used and the Scouts were fed outdoors. Cliff Swenson and his construction company, along with other volunteers, proceeded to donate building materials and labor to build the present Dining Hall. Later an add-on to the back was built to house walk-in storage and refrigeration. Still later a deck was added to the front to expand the seating. A sandbag dam in the river at the lower end of camp existed for about 5 years, then Cliff Swenson replaced it with one designed with a gateway that could be opened during the winter. Those remembering those first years recall the open air three hole latrines.

Bill Nicholson then donated work crews and materials from his construction company to build latrines, and the extensions to the Dining Hall. For years, a sign on the Dining Hall extolled the Explorer post that helped with this construction. They also built the Health Lodge, which has since received some remodeling. During the ensuing years, various other volunteer groups built other buildings to complete the camp. The Kiwanis Clubs of the San Jose area built the Boathouse in 1958, and later upgraded water lines to the campsites, painted buildings, and did other tasks. One year they replaced all the aging latrines. Kiwanis scheduled annual work parties at camp during the long Memorial weekends every year up until the 1990's. Some of the early water pipe replaced by Kiwanis is standing now as flagpoles in the flag meadow, and other remnants of the water main can be seen near Blackfoot Campsite.

Don Rose was reported to be a person working quietly without fanfare on a number of construction projects in camp, including the Program Building and the four Campmaster buildings. Only three Campmaster buildings remain today, one having been crushed by a falling tree. The south room in the Program Building is named after him. He also was instrumental in building the Rangers Cabin back in Elmer's day. Elmer was the camp ranger for many years, up through the 60's.

Dining Hall named: A Stella B. Gross plaque hangs in the Dining Hall. Stella was the camp cook for many of the early years. During the rest of the year she was a cook for a local school district.

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Electricity in camp: For the first few years the camp electricity was supplied by a generator. A war surplus Onan 5 kW generator, using a Ford 8N-tractor engine supplied power primarily to the Dining Hall. When the Cold Springs development sub-division started to grow, a water pumping station was installed along the river just above camp, and PG&E brought power lines in. They donated additional poles and made connections to the camp. The old Onan generator was retired. Later, a more modern diesel generator was donated to the camp as an emergency source, and is currently set up behind the Dining hall.

Water System: The first water supply came from Scout Creek, up above the present Nature Lodge, but it was inadequate for the new camp. Water then was taken from Porcupine Creek, and brought to camp via 4" steel, tar coated, pipes. Some of this pipe is now being used as flag poles in the Flag meadow. At the start of the 1960's, this supply was improved by pouring a small concrete dam and by installing three water tanks. Later chlorine treatment was added. This gravity system served for several years, until the need for a pressure system grew. Three wells were drilled, one by Blackfoot meadow, one at the edge of the Program meadow, and one in front of the Dining Hall. The one at the Dining Hall was a failure as a drill bit broke off and couldn't be retrieved, so it was capped off. The wells, with new pumps were effective in supplying the camp except for marginal pressure at the highest campsites.

DAM Committee: During these formative years of the camp, a small but very dedicated group of about 30 volunteers formed the Camp Development Committee, later dubbed the DAM (Development and Maintenance) Committee. For about 15 years, the DAM Committee was the major thrust in developing the camp. Working with the early camp ranger, Elmer, they expanded many of the camp facilities, including the early shower buildings. After Elmer left, and Alan Buscaglia became the ranger, the Dam Committee's last project was building the present maintenance building with overhead apartments and storage (referred to as the Corporation Building). The DAM committee envisioned the new overhead apartments as a place they could stay when they were working in camp. They have become a place where Camp Directors, or other staff personnel, could have their families during camp sessions. Arthur Green chaired this committee, with Dick DeVilbiss as vice-chairman. Many individual members of the DAM committee, such as Jack Currie and his wife Jackie, spent countless weekends over a number of years working on camp projects. Abe Hendricks is noted for his work with a backhoe. Jim Brent did much of the camp's electrical work.

Paid construction: The only buildings in camp built by paid contractors occurred in later years, they are the "new" youth and staff showers, and the latest go-around of latrines. The first

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Youth Showers having consisted of a wood fired boiler that Scouts had to light and stoke until there was sufficient hot water. Then the troop that built the fire would rush to take showers while the hot water lasted. With the “new” Youth Shower, the old shower building was converted into the present Nature Lodge. The youth shower building now has propane fired water heaters. The original Staff Showers also had a wood stoked boiler that later was changed to a fuel oil burner. The latest Staff Shower building, designed by architect Bob Varrelmann, Scoutmaster of Troop 234, represents a breakthrough in such facilities for Scout camps. Individual lockable privacy stalls make it possible to eliminate separate hours for male and female and for youth and adult use. The new Staff Shower building was built on the site of the original Staff Showers, but now uses an instant on propane heater. The current ranger, Alan Buscaglia, has been very instrumental in doing needed reconstruction throughout the camp and has done much of the finish work on recently constructed buildings. As Tuolumne County has become more “civilized” in recent years, they have been forced to adopt and enforce building codes and health codes that have affected more populated areas for many years. This has drastically changed the building practices in camp. This has become a mixed blessing, as one can’t just go out and do what he wants to do when so inclined, but must now go through planning, permits, inspections, and approvals. This is a new phase in the construction and reconstruction of Camp Hi-Sierra facilities.

The Dam: The first semblance of a dam consisted of sandbags, which backed the river up enough for a “swimming hole”. The current Dam, built originally by Cliff Swenson and his crew, is earth filled except for a center spillway. It has had the proclivity of being ravaged by winter storms and floods, and has washed out a couple of times in the camp’s history. So far, volunteers, saving the Council many thousands of dollars, have rebuilt it each time. The last time, two engineers, well versed in hydrology and soils, Bob Porter and Raimo Vahamaki, recruited a number of other volunteers and rebuilt the dam. This time they Gunned (a cement like coating) the surface, making it more resistant to erosion. For about eight years now they have come up each year to survey the dam’s condition and to affect repairs as needed. Property surveys indicate that a corner of the Dam is on USFS land. Any future major work on the Dam, will likely require USFS approval, as well as approval by the State Division of Water rights and by the Department of fish and Game.

The Climbing Wall: One of the last major projects, spearheaded by Doug Erickson, the current Camp Hi-Sierra properties chairman, and recommended by Ken Bower, current Camping committee chairman, was to build a climbing wall, completed in 1999 – the latest in program attractions.

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Campsites: In the earlier campsites, many of the tents were large 8-man wall tents set on wooden platforms, housing an entire patrol. Then the opportunity came following a National Jamboree to purchase at reduced cost a quantity of smaller 2-man tents. A volunteer, Wayne Wright, Sr., built new wooden tent platforms for all ten of the original campsites. This platform was based on a design printed in the BSA National camp design guidelines. This was a major modernization step toward what the campsites look like today. Later, Lockheed's Buck-of-the-Month Club donated and had built the first of new metal framed tent platforms. These were supplemented with newer models built by Master Metals at cost, as the owner, Mr. Lee Henderson, was a good friend of Mr. Stuart of Camp Stuart fame. As the small 2-man tents began to wear out, they were replaced by slightly larger wide wall tents (still classed as 2-man). All tents were originally fitted with war surplus steel bunk beds and mattresses. As these wore out, Scouts took to sleeping directly on the platform's plywood sheets or on cots brought from home. The platforms were slightly wider than the wide wall tents, and when it rained (as it often does suddenly in the mountains) the tent platforms and Scout's sleeping bags got wet. As a consequence, in recent years, custom tents have been purchased to better fit the platforms. The campsites originally had long (close to 8 ft) wash basins, so an entire patrol or small troop could be lined up in the mornings to wash their faces, brush their teeth, and comb their hair. One of these can still be seen in the Scout Craft area. These have been replaced in recent years with shorter 4-ft. wash racks, as forced wash-ups on cold mountain mornings are considered by some to be cruel and inhumane.

Campfire Circle: Originally the Campfire Circle was located across the river from the large concrete mill foundations upstream and across from the parking lot. Later it was on a sloped beach, down below the Program Meadow, overlooking the lake. Canoes played an important roll in campfire Tribe of H-Sierra ceremonies, as they were highly visible. Later, after the boathouse was built, award ceremonies, such as rank advancement, were enhanced by projecting images on the end wall of the boathouse. These ceremonies were a part of every Friday night's campfire for years. The DAM committee arranged to have the lake dredged to accommodate a larger boating area, which wiped out the Campfire Circle. The Campfire Circle was then rebuilt across the enlarged lake just South of Raccoon Creek, near the Foxfire area. Later, when it was washed away by flood waters during a winter storm, the Campfire Circle was moved again to a location on the hillside just North of the Boathouse. In 1994 it was moved again, South of the Boathouse, so as to overlook the lake. Alan Buscaglia built the stage, with the help of materials, including loads of railroad ties trucked up from Fresno by volunteer Bob Blake. The seating was built by volunteers and by the camp staff. The last move took out a foot washing facility that had been built by a volunteer for persons walking

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barefoot in the dirt after swimming. Volunteers have since built a smaller foot washing facility at the South end of the campfire circle.

As the river basin was ravaged by winter storms, the course of the stream was altered almost yearly. This was a factor in the changing location of Campfire Circles. In the first years of the camp, the river flowed through what is now the Tribe of Hi-Sierra ceremony ground, undercutting the old concrete mill foundations. A giant trout is said to have lived under the edge of the concrete, and many tried unsuccessfully to catch that trout.

Archery Range: The DAM committee enlarged the area near the sawdust pile to accommodate an Archery Range. When the Archery Director was drafted into the Army and killed in Vietnam, Troop 295 rebuilt the range with a new roof over the archers, and extended the number of stations. More recently, a fence contractor, Norm Alberti, donated labor and materials to make the Archery Range as it is today. The range is short by archery standards, but its attractiveness and convenience in the heart of camp make it very popular. It is the envy of other Scout camps.

Rifle Range & OA grounds: Two surveys of the property in the 1960's and early 1970's shifted the boundaries somewhat, leading to having to move some facilities. The Rifle Range was originally located in a small flat up above the program meadow. On the original Rifle Range, shooters lay prone on canvas tarps. Sometimes, tarps were hoisted overhead to provide the shooters with some shade. After the property survey, the range was moved across the river and uphill to its present location. Ute campsite was removed to accommodate the range, leaving only 9 campsites. Shotgun shooting was originally done in Blackfoot Meadow, using relatively low velocity 22 Caliber shot known as MO-Skeet. This was changed to 12 Gauge shotgun up at the present Rifle Range, which has limited space for shotgun shooting. Later, Ed Sheldon supervised the building of the present Rifle Range structure, which is a model for other Scout camps. The site of the original range was used for some years as an Order of the Arrow Ceremonial Ground. After the second property survey confirmed the site to be on Forest Service land, the Ceremonial Ground was moved across the river to a location up above Navajo campsite. Then it was moved to a small spot up Raccoon Creek, and now to its present location high up above Havasu campsite, where it replaced an unused Action Archery Range. The OA Ceremonial Ground is isolated from the main camp, but is accessible by road and has a new trail leading to it.

Clavey Building: The building known today as the Clavey building was a carryover of the Logging camp days, and was above the present Dining Hall. Later it was moved to the North end of the Program Building. Over the years is served as the Nature building, a museum of Indian and logging relics, and as the Trading post. A number of years ago it was moved across the river to its

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present site and renamed the Clavey Building. Troops were allowed to put up signs, extolling their overnight hikes to the Clavey River. This building is the only remaining building from the logging days.

The Clavey Trail: Early on, the trail to the Clavey river represented a challenging adventure. The trail crossed Porcupine creek below Blackfoot Campsite, turned East and climbed up past a giant sugar pine, working its way up the ridge where it met an old logging railroad bed, turned right a short distance, then left up to the Lava Beds (mud flows). The lava beds were a popular site for night astronomy. Hikers to the Clavey would often have a trail breakfast at the lava beds before proceeding over Dodge Ridge past an old hunter's camp then downhill via an old logging skid road to a cattle corral. Going either through or around the corral, they would go on to the Clavey River, arriving in time for lunch. Afternoons at the Clavey were often spent fishing, or swimming in the river pools and sliding down the rockslides into the pools. Many pant seats were worn through doing this. For years we kept a cache of patrol cooking gear at our Clavey River campsite, saving the hassle of packing it in every week. Nobody ever bothered it. Unfortunately, with the changing character of the times, brought by the passage of years, it is no longer safe to do so. More recently, we have moved the Clavey River campsite downstream, below the swimming holes, as new logging destroyed the original site. Exploring the Clavey area, some troops located an old railroad caboose that still had dishes on the table. Hikers today will follow much of the original trail, but will see some new scenery. The old landmark Sugar Pine is gone, but you will encounter the crossing of some new roads, and the Bee Hives. Every traveler on this trail will discover the now rusty tin can lids nailed to trees nearly a half century ago that marked the original trail, painted with a "C" for the Clavey or an "H" for home (Hi-Sierra).

The Burro Farm: From the mid 1950's to the mid 1960's, several burros were kept in camp. These were used for the treks to the Clavey and beyond for carrying food and other supplies. They were usually tethered in the meadow along the river, just South of the Archery range. Occasionally one would get loose, sometimes sticking its head in a tent during the night. Many Scouts were scared out of their be-jeebers by this action. One burro, Esmeraldo, had a calibrated back. If a load was put on that was too heavy by even a few ounces, she would lay down. No effort would bring her to her feet until the excessive ounces were removed. Burros were brought back for one year in the early 1980's, but were not as well accepted as in the early years.

Sierra Camp: Just North of camp is Sierra Camp, an unimproved USFS campsite. This was in existence prior to Camp Hi-Sierra, and was a popular place for families to camp while Scout sons and fathers were with their troop in camp. The location had a pit latrine, but no running water.



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Water was gathered from the river for drinking and washing and was considered safe in those days. In the mid 1970's, when attendance was growing at camp, a need was seen for more campsites. With permission from USFS, we were allowed to build six new sites: Costanoan, Delaware, Nez Perce, Maidu, Paiute and Yahi. These sites were popular through the 1980's. In exchange, we unofficially looked after Sierra campsite.

Campsite moves: In the early 1990's, a change in philosophy by the USFS forced us to move these sites onto camp property. It crowded the campsite area somewhat, but was acceptable. 15 campsites now adorn the camp property. The USFS Sierra Camp remains unimproved, and visitors often camp there.

Other trails out of camp: Another popular overnight hike was up to Highway 108, and down the other side to the Stanislaus River. Crossing the river, and heading up stream were some excellent camping spots. Following an old road down river, before crossing the bridge, was an excellent swimming hole. Shorter hikes were popular for less experienced troops. Down river from Camp Hi-Sierra a short distance to Loggers Camp, with the more adventurous going a greater distance down to Brown Meadow, gave an opportunity to explore the lower river. Once, down at Brown Meadow, a couple of Scouts found a rattlesnake. Stoning it, and thinking it dead, they carried it into camp to show the rest of the troop. Setting it on the ground, it came very much alive. John Herschbach, the accompanying staff member, immediately stepped on the snake near the head pinning it down and dispatching it with his pocketknife. Upstream to Cat's Eye Meadow was also a popular hike, as well as up the hill to the Indian Burial Grounds where a grand view from the ridge top is to be found. Some of these trails are still popular today.

Camp Programs: Looking back on the camp programs, they were rather structured or regimented in the early days compared to today's program. SPL's scheduled their troops at specific times for troop boating, swimming, canoeing, archery, rifle shooting, nature tours, etc. The whole troop would go together. Merit Badge classes were also held according to a fixed schedule, not to conflict with troop schedules. Later, programs shifted to an open schedule where individual Scouts could sign up or go to program areas at any time. In theory, this was nice but in practice some program areas had to have fixed schedules for classes and other programs. For example, shotgun and rifle shooting couldn't be done safely at the same time on the same range. Today's programs are a blend of open and structured schedules. SPL's were brought to camp a week early for SPL training and working on Merit Badges so they would be free to lead their Troop the following week. Part of the SPL training was laying out the week's schedule for their Troop.

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Sea-Dog Cruise: Friday afternoon camp-wide games, affectionately called Sea-Dog Cruise because they ended at the waterfront, have been part of the program since the earliest days. The games usually start at Blackfoot Meadow, and feature a number of contests selected by the SPL's. For several of the early years, a grease pole was part of the games. Winning troops reached the top by forming a pyramid with a tall light Scout on top able to get the candy bar on top. This was discontinued because of potential injuries. A logrolling contest was discontinued for the same reason. Two contestants with balance staffs would try to dump each other. The seven-man oar-less with a rowboat has always been popular, but has recently been changed to 5 man. The Scoutmaster's kangaroo race, with a Scoutmaster paddling from the front of a canoe, has been an annual bit of excitement. A swimming race, pushing a watermelon by the swimmers nose has always been fun. The swimming was often a relay race starting with non-swimmers in the shallows and progressing with the water depth to swimmers.

Memories of the Staff: For most years, the quality of the camp staff has been highly rated. There are a few staff members who continue to be talked about years later. Chris Rocca, Nature director is known for his eating of quantities of June bugs. John Stevenson is remembered for wondering what it would be like to fill the muzzleloader barrel full of powder, and blowing the stock off without injury to himself. Art Webb is remembered as the smiling cook, appearing as if he was humming happily to himself as he worked.

Early Camp Programs: During the first years, Ken Robison helped direct the camp and was instrumental in fostering the nature of its use. He encouraged winter camping programs by Explorers and experienced troops. During the summer season, which typically lasted for seven weekly sessions (occasionally 8 or 9 weeks during the late 1960's), there were three major types of programs. A typical troop would sign up for the in-camp programs and eat in the Dining Hall. An option was for a unit to do their own cooking. Blackfoot campsite was built with campsite cooking in mind. A third option was for a unit to use the camp as a staging or acclimation site before heading on a trek into the backcountry. After spending a day in camp, a troop might hike to a location near Bell Meadow, then take off into the high country – coming back at the end of the week.

Camp Directors: In the late 50's, Don Gray, one of the Council's professional staff, was Camp Director, before transferring to another council. Jim Dunbolten, another District Executive took over, and hired John Burney, a schoolteacher, as Program Director. Together, as a team, they brought the camp programs up to a peak during the early sixties. After several years, Jim was forced

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to retire because of ill health, and John Burney took over as Camp Director. Following this, the camp has had quite a succession of camp and program directors, few lasting more than a year or two.

Tribe of Hi-Sierra: Jim Dunbolten, who was a Native American, fostered the Tribe of Hi-Sierra. Patterned initially after similar programs at other camps, Jim associated the tribe with the Miwoks and brought it to a peak during his tenure. Jim often donned Indian regalia, with elaborate headdress, and, carrying a torch, would come up the lake in a canoe to start tribe ceremonies. Instead of bead awards as we have today, the camp used belt stamps. Many who attended camp in those years treasure the stamped belts in their collection. During the late 1950's up through the 1970's, Scrolls hung above the Dining Hall fireplace, with the signatures of all Chiefs in the tribe. By the 1980's the tribe had changed in perspective several times with the turnover of camp and program directors, and was losing its appeal. Adults could rise only to the rank of Satchem. All the old tribe records and the Chiefs scrolls were destroyed. A committee was formed, chaired by Ed Sheldon, with Frank Dais, Mark Cahn, and John Herschbach as members to investigate revival of the Tribe. The committee proceeded to restore the original Tribe program, but used beads rather than belt stamps. Almost instant success followed in acceptance of the revitalized Tribe of Hi-Sierra as a major program in Camp Hi-Sierra.

Ed Sheldon often recants the story of when he met a "Native American" along the river in camp, who identified himself as a Chief named Old Jim in the Miwoks and reminisced about when he was a child and how his family made their home along the banks where camp is now.

The Health Lodge: One of the first camp buildings was the "Doctor's Cottage", which was soon dubbed the Health Lodge. In 1955, Dr. Vinton Matthews became the Camp Doctor. During weeks when he was unable to staff the lodge, he arranged with other doctors to staff the facility. When a physician was unavailable, a registered nurse was scheduled so the camp would have full summer medical coverage. Doc's office nurse, Grace, became his wife and started coming to camp in 1961, often for the entire summer. In 1982, the Health Lodge was dedicated as the "Dr. Vinton S. Matthews Health Lodge", a title most fitting in recognition of Doc's years of dedication. When Vinton Matthews passed away in 1991, Grace took over and has managed the Health Lodge to this day. The Kiwanis Club of south San Jose feel they have adopted the Health Lodge in honor of Grace, and budgets \$300 annually towards its upkeep.

Flag meadow, Troop assembly: One event mentioned by many who attended camp during the early years was a sign in the Flag Meadow upon which could be hung the 12 parts of the Scout Law. At each assembly, morning and evening, a staff member would hang the next part of the Scout Law and talk about it. At the end of the week, all 12 parts were posted. For a number of years, the

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“Neckerchief Slide of the Day Contest” was a popular skill activity awarded at assembly time. During the 1970’s, a perpetual flame burned day and night at the Flag Meadow.

Commissioner Program: In the late 1960’s and early 1970’s, a Campmaster program was conceived. Campmasters were volunteer Scouters who would support Troop Leaders in camp, helping them to make campsite living a pleasant experience. The four Campmaster buildings were constructed to house them. This program lasted until some concerns arose over liability coverage, and the program was discontinued. Later, one of the Campmaster buildings was severely damaged by a falling tree, and was torn down. After this experience, the paid staff was increased to cover three and ultimately four “commissioner sites”, where the staff would conduct “Trail to First Class” programs, “Tote-n-Chip”, “Fireman Chit”, and “Paul Bunyan” skill training as well as looking after the campsites and doing campsite inspections. The early campsites had small, 3-foot high, poles with striped markings and a flag on a rope. The top blue marking represented a “blue” top award on inspection, and a bottom red marking a “red flag”.

Commissioner site changes: In recent years, the Commissioner Sites have been reduced to one, and repopulated with adult volunteer commissioners. The “Trail to First Class” program has been moved into a central program area.

**Summary: So it is in the history of Camp Hi-Sierra. Many dedicated people have devoted years of their lives to our camp. The beauty of the site is only exceeded by the wonders of the youth coming to camp each summer.**

Acknowledgements: Some 1949 (first year of the camp) campers visited us this summer of 1999 and added some significant remembrances to the first seasons. Many thanks go to Don Nolte, Jordan Daniels, Ron Hagelin, and Tom West – early day members of Troop 13. Thank you fellows for confirming and editing this history. Hope to see you back. The pictures you brought and showed all of us, along with your personalities, really helped us to cap off this historical 50<sup>th</sup> year of Camp Hi-Sierra.

**Ranger's Document** : The following is a document found in the Ranger's Cabin at Camp Hi-Sierra. It is undated, and does not show an author, but from its content it appears to have originated in the early 1960's. It differs in minor detail from the history described above.

**LAND USE PROGRAM  
CAMP HI-SIERRA  
*circa 1960***

Camp Hi-Sierra is located on the north fork of the Tuolumne River – 8 miles above Long Barn and 5 miles below Strawberry Resort on Hiway 108 – 35 miles east of Sonora on Hiway 108. The mailing address is Box 1274, Star Route, Sonora, California, 95370.

The entire property is surrounded by National Forest. The camp consists of 87 acres of privately owned property purchased in 1942 from Mr. Ed Jennis by the Executive Board, Santa Clara County Council, Boy Scouts of America, 2095 Park Avenue, San Jose, California.

Camp Hi-Sierra was purchased for the purpose of extending the Scouting Program to the entire youth of Santa Clara County. The camp provided a facility for all boys registered in the Scouting program to enjoy.

Over the years the intended use of this property has changed very little. Camp Hi-Sierra fulfills a vital part of the overall camping needs of Santa Clara County Council. Namely, that Scouts might take advantage of Camp Stuart their first year – organized for a long term camping experience of 6 days and nights. Then the following two years would be spent at Camp Hi-Sierra, and the fourth year at a Hi-Adventure trail camp. With this camping experience as a guide, Camp Hi-Sierra has been developed for the maximum use of the property. The camp is used during the winter months for winter camping, and the summer months as a long term camping facility. Training sessions are also held in the fall and early winter.

This report has been prepared under the guidance of Survey and Recommendations Office of the National Engineering Service, Boy Scouts of America and the Land Use Section of the Forest Service. The Health Department of Santa Clara County and San Jose City contributed their technical knowledge to the development of facilities where applicable.

The property development has been a gradual program and as the demands have increased the land use program was restudied and changes made to better serve Scouting. Keeping in mind the 3 programs that a Unit might participate in while at camp. Namely: Plan #1 – Central dining facilities available – unit eats all meals except three (breakfast, lunch, dinner) which they prepare on an overnight experience at a near by outpost camp. Plan #2 – A Unit prepares their own food in

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their campsite (Jamboree Style). Refrigeration and food storage available. Plan #3 – A Unit check in, takes advantage of a medical recheck then sets off on a week of Hi-Adventure hiking and camping in the Sierra Nevada mountains.

Taking the above camping program needs as a basis for physical development the following use of the property was designated as most advantageous:

Starting at the southeast corner of the property the stream runs through the property and with the help of a dam a waterfront area has been constructed covering approximately 2 acres feet of water. This area is the lowest part of the camp property immediately up stream from the waterfront area is the campfire circle overlooking the waterfront area. To the west of the campfire circle is located the rifle range. This area being designated by the National Engineering Service as the only safe area to conduct a safe firing range in camp. A safety fence covers the entire range with only one entrance to and from the area. The actual firing is into a steep cut into the hillside. A facility located as a part of the range is used for the instruction of Hunter Safety. The lower meadow area covering approximately 10 acres laying to the east of Rifle Range and north of the campfire circle has been designated and planned as a wide game area, program demonstration area and a control point for program planning and development. The Senior Patrol campsite is located in the southern end of the lower meadow. The Program Building, Staff Lounge, quartermaster and Trading Post are located in this lower meadow area. The Nature Hut is located just north of the program building. This building is the last remaining building existing in the days of the lumber camp operation. The upper meadow covering approximately 20 acres is the central and northwest part of camp. The original camp development programmed for the dining hall in the central camp area. Staff area and Health Lodge lying just along the central camp boundary. The electrical distribution system building is located in the central camp area to facilitate the distribution of electrical power where necessary. The parking lot covers approximately 3 acres of the upper meadow. The maintenance and shop area is located in the northeast corner of the property. Just inside of the main gate located in the middle of the upper meadow is the Camp Director cabin. Opposite the main road into camp is located by special permission of the Executive Board a pumping station for a housing development located above camp. The parade grounds are located in the center of the upper meadow, planned for easy availability to all campsites. The property lying to the east of the river which divides the camp is developed and planned for the troop sites. Taking advantage of the natural terrain, the heavily wooded areas, 10 campsite locations make the maximum use of the property. Each Troop site is well defined unto itself by patrols. 500 to 700 feet of under brush and timber divide and separate each campsite. These locations were established and planned so water could be piped to

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each campsite. There is suitable space in each Troop site to conduct the Troop Program. Equipment and facilities being a part of each campsite location. For the most part the soil is sawdust composition. Campsite conservation is a part of each Troop site in its original conception.

Two small streams run through the east part of camp. On the north property line is Porcupine Creek, where the camp secures its domestic water, which is collected and purified at the water system collection area. Then it is distributed to the entire camp by water lines. (see map of camp development).

The MO-Skeet range and archery range are located and planned for proper safe fire. It is located in the upper meadow area along the north property line. In the east center part of the property is a large sawdust pile on the hillside. This has been programmed and is a vital part of camp for a ski and toboggan run for winter camping.

Reviews from government Forest Service, Health Department officials and the National Engineering Service indicate that this camp is developed to the maximum. With their recommendations and help, camp conservation of sites and facilities will be studied each 5 years or more often if necessary. It is recommended that additional facilities be made available at another location to keep pace with the demands of land use.