

GYPSY CAMP FOR GIRLS, HISTORIC DISTRICT
Arkansas Route 59
Siloam Springs vicinity
Benton County
Arkansas

HALS AR-5
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
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HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

GYPSY CAMP FOR GIRLS (Camp Gypsy)

HALS NO. AR-5

Location: Arkansas Highway 59 South (adjacent to the Illinois River bridge)
Siloam Springs, Benton County, Arkansas

Latitude: 36.112558, Longitude: -94.537758 (Front of Queen's Tavern, Google Earth, simple cylindrical projection, WGS84)

Significance: The Gypsy Camp for Girls, a private, thematic summer camp in the Ozark Mountains of northwest Arkansas, operated from 1922 to 1978. The camp was the brainchild of Weesie Griffith McAllister, the director of the art department at the University of Tulsa in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Her inspiration for the camp came from gypsy camps she had observed while traveling in Europe. The camp's dramatic landscape setting, nestled into a steep ravine under dramatic, overhanging bluffs along a wide bend in the Illinois River, reinforced the theatricality and romantic imagery conjured by the camp's theme. The Gypsy Camp was one of four prominent girls' camps established in Arkansas in the 1910s and 20s, serving girls from Arkansas and surrounding states. These camps were products of a national movement promoting health and education benefits of summer camps for girls (summer camps for boys became popular in the late nineteenth century). All four camps operated successfully until the 1960s and 70s, when they closed due to widespread cultural shifts which led to declining enrollment numbers. Unlike the other three former camps, the Gypsy Camp retains much of its original character, as the site still owned and maintained by a grandson of the McAllisters. The Gypsy Camp is the last largely intact representation of the formative period of an important American landscape genre, the girls' summer camp, in the state of Arkansas.

Description: **Landscape Setting:** The Gypsy Camp's layout is a direct result of the site's dramatic natural landscape. The camp is located on a sixty-five-acre parcel with approximately a mile of riverfront on the Illinois River. The river forms the southern boundary of the property, which is also bordered by Arkansas Highway 59 to the east and undeveloped residential parcels along the unimproved West Spring Harbor Road to the north. Much of the camp property is located in a low, flat floodplain with the northern border of the property consisting of steep, wooded hillsides and majestic limestone bluffs of the low but rugged Ozark

Mountains. (Figure 1) From the highest point on the property to the lowest, there is approximately 150' of elevation change. The wide range of elevations and ecosystems create ideal habitats for a diverse variety of plants and wildlife. The steep hillsides also contain many hydrologic features including wet-weather waterfalls, streams, and springs.

The developed core of the camp is nestled in the mouth of a narrow ravine located near a dramatic 90 degree bend in the river, nestled in the mouth of a narrow ravine. Due to the floodplain below and steep hillsides above, this narrow strip of land constitutes the only area suitable for building on the property. The hillsides above the camp are dotted with large, overhanging limestone cliffs. The sheltered position of the core creates inward views to adjacent camp structures and outward, southern views of the Illinois River valley. (Figure 2) The natural setting of the camp is vividly described and promoted in a late-1920s brochure:

Seldom is there a location found so suitable for a camp. Visualize a beautiful verdan [sic.] slope in the midst of the rolling Ozark Hills. Cast your eye scarcely fifty yards away to the broad, cool Illinois River rushing and rippling around a wide bend on its dash to the sea. Gypsy Camp has 65 acres of wonderful land shaded with tall mountain trees protected from the elements by overhanging cliff [sic.], endowed with a fine athletic field, tennis courts, modern swimming and boating equipment - here you have a word sketch of beautiful Gypsy Camp. (Brochure, 1920s)

The Illinois River is one of the two most important natural features located on the site. The upstream leg of the abrupt bend was more than 300' wide during the years the camp was in operation, creating ample area for water based recreational activities including swimming (Figure 3), lifesaving, canoeing, rowing, and waterskiing. (Figure 4) The downstream leg of the river was about half the width at 150'. During the 1920s two low dams were built on the Illinois River approximately three-and-one-half miles downstream from the camp to create Lake Frances. The second dam, built by a new resort created for wealthy pleasure-seekers from Tulsa, brought the high-water mark of the lake within a mile of the Gypsy Camp. In 1954 the town of Siloam Springs purchased the lake. By the time the camp closed in the 1970s the lake contained high levels of silt. The Lake Frances dam failed during the early 1990s following a major flood event which resulted in the river at the Gypsy Camp returning to its natural level. The lake level dropped approximately three feet. Following the dam's loss, an island began to develop in the upstream leg of the bend. The island grew in size and is now connected to the east bank. This reduced the river channel adjacent to

the camp from over 300' to only 100'. This change has had a large impact on the character of the former camp, perhaps more so than any other change.

The abrupt edge of the Ozarks along the Illinois River valley is the other dominant natural feature seen in the landscape surrounding the camp. South-facing cliffs in the hillsides to the east and west of the camp's core range to over 100' in height. In the limestone bluff west of the core there is a large overhang that runs 400' along its base. In places this overhang measures more than 30' in depth and 20' in height. Stone tools, pottery, and ancient human remains found beneath this overhang during the last 100 years suggest that the bluff served as a shelter for Native Americans prior to European settlement of the area. Before the creation of the Gypsy Camp in the 1920s, the previous property owner used the overhanging bluff to house his mules. The floodplain below the bluff was used to grow corn to feed them. (Coe 1993) During the sixty years that the Gypsy Camp was in operation, the overhanging bluff was used in place of a barn to shelter the camp's horses, their feed, tackle, and other related implements. Following the camp's closure in 1978 this area was used for the storage of architectural salvage including miscellaneous recycled lumber, wood doors, and wood sash windows. The bluffs also shelter the camp's collection of turn-of-the-century farm wagons. (Figure 5)

Architectural Materials: The architectural materials used to construct the Gypsy Camp's buildings and site features are an integral part of the camp's distinct rustic character. The vernacular architectural materials used at the Gypsy camp changed throughout the sixty years the camp was in operation as lumber became more readily available. This is very important to the character of the camp today. The early camp buildings dating from the 1920s were constructed from a mixture of local materials including native field limestone, concrete, pine logs, pine clapboard siding, and wood framing. Most of the wood products were harvested and milled on site. More recent additions and repairs to the camp (1960s-2011) have consisted of manufactured lumber products such as plywood and prefabricated pine siding that were purchased in Siloam Springs, the nearest town to the north. The foundations of the eleven contributing buildings, as well as a single contemporary residence, consist of a mixture of stone, concrete, and wood. The roofing of all the camp buildings consists of corrugated sheet metal. A combination of both old and newer materials has become the vernacular of rural areas in the Ozark Mountains, and therefore this combination of materials has had a very negligible impact on the integrity and overall appearance of the Gypsy Camp. These somewhat eclectic architectural materials, together with the dramatic topography, have created the character that defines the Gypsy Camp

today.

Contributing Structures: The Gypsy Camp consists of eleven contributing buildings, one contemporary non-contributing residence, a contributing structure which was only recently lost, and multiple contributing landscape features. All of the landscape features, and all but one of the buildings date from the 1920s through the mid-1960s. The camp buildings dating from the 1920s were built in the rustic style with lumber which was harvested and milled on site. Bob Coe, the current owner and grandson of the camp founders was told by an elderly neighbor, Herschal Dunlap, that the logs were lowered from the top of the large bluff using a rope and pulley system powered by Coe's grandfather's Cadillac. (Coe 1993)

All eleven contributing buildings are located in the mouth of a steep ravine that extends northward into the Ozark Mountains from the Illinois River floodplain. The orientation, floor plans, and elevations of the camp buildings were tied directly to their functions and position in the dramatic topography of the site. The design intent of the camp buildings was even used as advertising material in promotional literature:

To preserve the outdoor atmosphere, yet to provide comfortable and safe lodging for girls accustomed to the finest, the management of Gypsy Camp has provided seven large camp buildings all of splendid, permanent construction, comfortable in their accommodations and attractive in appearance. (Brochure 1930s)

Two of the ten contributing buildings in the camp's core, the Coe House and the Royal Hut, are two-story private residences that were constructed to be inhabited at all times of the year. These buildings were constructed on the outside edges of the ravine in locations which offered southern sun exposure during the winter and also the cooling effects of the microclimate created by the large bluffs during the summer months. These residences had hearths which would allow for supplemental heating when needed. The Coe House was built in 1928, replacing a two-story log building, known as the Pole House. (Figure 7) The Pole House was built in 1925 but burned in 1927. The Royal Hut was built in two phases. A one-story, one-room log cabin was constructed in 1925 and a large, two-story addition was completed in 1928. This residence was the longest continually used building at the camp. It remained in use until 2011. (Figure 8)

The other eight contributing buildings in the core were designed strictly for use during the summer months. These buildings had screened windows without

glazing, allowing for natural cooling as the cool air dropped from the higher elevations above the bluffs and moved through the ravine where the camp was located. These buildings did not have insulation or any other means of supplemental heating or cooling. The structures served as cabins, dining halls, craft pavilions, a sleep-out shelter, a canteen, and restrooms.

Three contributing buildings were residential cabins. These cabins are two-stories tall and each level has its own name; Romany Inn and Vagabond Villa (Figure 9), Upper and Lower Gypsy (Figure 10), and Upper and Lower Rover's Rest (Figure 11). The cabins are nestled into both sides of the steep ravine, creating views to the other camp structures and defining a flat open space on the ravine floor. Each cabin structure held approximately sixteen girls for up to eight weeks. The cabins and several other adjacent camp buildings contain hundreds of names and the years of attendance of campers dating from the 1930s through the 1970s. These names are the result of a longstanding tradition that the girls, when leaving the camp at the end of the summer, would sign the walls and exposed rafters of the buildings. (Caudle 1992) (Figure 12) The camp's accommodations were described in an early publication:

The sleeping houses are screened all around, so that the girls may enjoy the benefits of sleeping in the open without inconvenience. The houses are well furnished with good steel cots and woven wire springs and comfortable mattress pads. Each sleeping house is used by girls of approximately the same age.(Brochure 1930s)

One of the largest buildings in the camp is composed of three stories that, like the residential cabins, climb the sides of the ravine and provide ground-level access at each story. Also like the cabins, each story has a formal name; Angel's Alley (first story), Devil's Den (second story), and Tree-Top Inn (third story). (Figure 13) The first two floors served as residential cabins and a nurse's station, while a large open room on the third level housed arts and crafts and other activities for the campers. Tree-Top Inn provides a panoramic view of the camp below and out to the Illinois River valley.

A second large building in the camp's core is the centrally located Queen's Tavern, a two-story building with a dining hall on the first floor and a theater on the second where the campers would perform plays. The theater was referred to as the "Little Theatre of the Ozarks" in the 1928 Sargent's Directory of American Summer Camps. (Sargent 1928) Unlike the other camp buildings, the Queen's Tavern is positioned on the ravine floor, filling the northern inlet of the V-shaped

ravine and forming the visual terminus of the camp's core. (Figure 14) Two large murals hang in the first floor dining room of the Queen's Tavern. The murals depict camp scenes such as girls dancing around the campfire and floating in boats on the lake. (Figure 15) Originally installed in the dining room on the top floor of the Tree-Top Inn, the murals were relocated in the 1940s following the completion of the Queen's Tavern dining hall. (Figure 16)

Three small, one-story accessory structures are also located in the core of the camp. Two of these structures housed the restrooms and showers (Figure 17), while the third was constructed as a well house. Soon after its construction the well house was repurposed as a canteen where campers could purchase an assortment of snacks. (Figure 18)

A contributing building and structure are located outside of the camp's core. An unimproved structure known to campers as "Wildflower" served as a sleep-out shelter located high above the core of the Gypsy Camp on the "Big Bluff." This structure, approximately 120' above the rest of the camp, affords views of the Illinois River valley and allows filtered views down to the camp's core.

Wildflower was built in the 1960s and is of post and beam construction with a sleeping platform and gabled roof. The structure rests on piers and has one exterior wall on the north facade and a large porch overlooking the valley on the south facade. The structure had electricity to provide adequate lighting. (Figure 19) The shelter was used for several years until it was discovered in the early 1970s by a group of high school boys from the nearby town of Siloam Springs. (Bob Coe 2011) Following this "unfortunate" event the sleep-out structure's use decreased significantly due to safety and security concerns.

The other isolated historic building was a one-story residence that was lost in 2011. Coe removed the building as a result of it becoming a hazard due to its poor condition following years of exposure to the elements. The "Indian House" as it was known, was reportedly constructed Ca. 1915 by a Native American family in the flat floodplain next to the Illinois River. Following a bout of severe seasonal flooding soon after its construction, the family abandoned the house. (Bob Coe 2011) Upon the purchase of the Gypsy Camp property the Indian House was relocated from its original location along the Illinois River to higher ground at the base of the bluff near the entrance to the camp. (Coe, 1993) The Indian House served as both a private residence and a gate house while the camp was in operation. (Figure 20)

In 2011 a small, one-story cabin with a loft was designed by Coe and constructed by his neighbors. The residence was built adjacent to both the "Royal Hut" and

the camp's historical core. This is the only contemporary, non-contributing structure on the Gypsy Camp property. Unlike the surrounding early structures at the Gypsy Camp the new building is insulated and has both electric heating and cooling. The structure also has a fireplace for supplemental heating. The "River View Cabin" has large panoramic glass windows that allow views of the Gypsy Camp's historic core, the Illinois River, and the surrounding landscape. Coe, who had until 2011 lived in the Royal Hut, now resides in the River View Cabin. To make room for the new cabin a small terraced gathering space adjacent to the Royal Hut was removed. This space was defined by dry-stacked fieldstone retaining walls and contained picnic tables for entertaining large groups. (Figure 21)

Site Features: The Gypsy Camp retains many important site features dating from the camp's nearly 50 years of operation that contribute significantly to the camp's character. Prominent extant features in the camp's core include a triangular fire ring, a masonry stone wall with archway and connected goldfish pond, an engineered drainage channel, and a concrete-reinforced bank at the river's edge. Notable historic elements outside the core include the entrance gate, a swimming pool, and the remnants of two concrete tennis courts.

The triangular fire ring served as the central gathering point and also as a popular icon for the Gypsy Camp. (Figure 22) The iconic triangular fire ring was constructed Ca. 1960. It replaced an earlier stone ring which had stood in the same location since the camp's earliest years. The fire ring was an essential part of the Gypsy Camp experience. Weekly ceremonies would be held at the ring, where campers would dress up as gypsies and dance in circles around the campfire. (Figure 23) The 3-legged, iron tripod with a cast-iron kettle suspended by a chain over the fire pit was featured in promotional materials and camp patches as the emblematic symbol of the camp. (Figure 24) The triangular fire ring derives its shape from the three legs of the tripod and consists of a 1' high concrete curb surrounded by a 3' wide concrete walk. A dry-stacked stone facade now covers the face of the curb, but the stone has been placed here since the camp closed. An important historical feature directly related to the fire ring was seating around the perimeter. This seating consisted of wood planks supported by cinder blocks. The benches formed a rough circle approximately 20' in diameter. The seating is not currently set up because it has been stored to facilitate lawn maintenance.

Several other historic built elements also remain at the camp's core. A low, mortared fieldstone wall with an incorporated archway and rectangular goldfish

pond was constructed in 1921 by David Gettes, a Scottish immigrant and Coe's great uncle. This stonework has for many years been an important part of the Gypsy Camp. A brochure image from the early 1930s shows Coe and campers posing in front of the stone archway, and another brochure from the 1960s show campers posing in the same location. Running parallel to the wall, a vehicle's width to the east, lies a concrete and fieldstone drainage channel. The drainage channel is important in keeping the Gypsy Camp site dry. The location of the camp in the bottom of a ravine results in a large quantity of water passing through the camp during storm events. The drainage channel collects water from the hillsides to the north of the camp and moves it along the eastern edge of the camp core to the Illinois River. A large, wooden vehicular bridge was constructed over the canal to allow service vehicles to enter the camp's core. A small concrete bridge was also constructed over the channel to allow pedestrian access from the buildings on the eastern hillside to the fire ring and river. (Figure 25) The bank of the river along the core is reinforced against erosion by four terraced concrete retaining walls, each approximately 3' high. Concrete steps lead down the walls to a concrete platform where a dock once jutted out into the lake. (Figure 26)

There are also several notable site features east of the core. The Gypsy Camp property is accessed from Arkansas Highway 59 by a private, unimproved drive located along the base of the bluffs. When turning off of Highway 59, visitors to the camp pass under a simple rustic wooden gateway with a hanging sign displaying the name of the camp. (Figure 27) This entry feature is important for way-finding and creating a sense of arrival. The gateway has been replaced multiple times due to the relocation of the entrance, natural degradation, and damage cause by vehicles. After passing through the gateway the drive angles slightly north, then turns west near the sloped base of the bluffs. Near the location of this turn the ground north of the entrance road rises gently above the flood plain, accessing a narrow strip of developable land at the east end of the 400' long overhanging bluff. This is the area where the Indian House was relocated to and where a brick and concrete swimming pool was constructed in the 1960s. (Figure 28) The purpose of the small pool was to create a safe place to swim for those campers who were not comfortable swimming in the Illinois River. The swimming pool replaced a wooden swimming crib that had been submerged in the Illinois River for beginning-level swimmers. South of the pool, across the access road and in the middle of the field are the remnants of two concrete tennis courts constructed in the 1960s. The Gypsy Camp tennis courts were once surrounded by a chain link fence and two rows of trees. (Figure 29)

Current Condition: Bob Coe, along with his wife, Daisy, remained at the camp after it closed in 1978. Daisy died in 2005 and Coe, now in his 90s, continues to maintain the camp to the degree that he is able. The camp is virtually unchanged from its appearance in the late 1970s; the cabins still house bunk beds, the dining hall is still fully stocked with dinnerware still sitting on the shelves, and the kitchen still has its original equipment including sinks, mixers, and a refrigerator. Although the structures and landscape features have a high degree of integrity for their age, their condition has declined significantly since the camp was included in the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district in 1988. Stairs that once allowed access to the upper levels of many of the structures have now decayed, resulting in the upper floors of some of the Gypsy Camp's structures being inaccessible. A 500-year flood on the Illinois River in the spring of 2011 caused further damage to camp structures and items stored within them at lower elevations, as they were inundated with up to 8' of water. (Figure 30) While seasonal flooding has always occurred at the camp, many buildings which had never flooded in the camp's history sustained damage. The future of the Gypsy Camp is uncertain. A source of funding, further documentation, and preservation planning are needed in order to preserve the story of the camp for future generations.

History:

Context: The Gypsy Camp for Girls which opened in 1922, was part of the second phase of a national movement promoting youth summer camps. The first phase of the summer camp movement began between 1870 and 1880 in New Hampshire, when camps Chocorua, Asquam, and Pasquaney were established for young boys (Maynard 1999). The popularity of summer camps grew rapidly in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and while there were some coed and girl-only camps, the emphasis was clearly on boys. For example, by 1901 the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) operated 167 camps across the United States (mostly in the northeast), while its sister organization, the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), had only one camp in Altamont, New York. (Paris 2001) The second phase began with the formation of several scouting organizations, including the Boy Scouts of American in 1910, the Camp Fire Girls of America in 1911, and the Girl Scouts of the United States (initially Girl Guides of America) in 1912. In addition to camps established by large, national organizations, many boys' and girls' camps were also created in the 1910s and 20s by small, private parties. Summer camps were seen as a "back to nature" movement which developed in response to an increasingly industrialized American society. These camps were born out of a belief that contact with nature was essential for children's physical and mental health, and overall well-being,

and they were heralded as an integral part of children's regular primary education. Harvard University President Charles W. Eliot declared in 1922 that summer camps were "the most important step in education that America has given the world." (Fint 2004)

Permanent summer camps for girls begin to be established in Arkansas during the second phase of the national camps movement. These early camps were constructed in the Ozark Mountains of northern Arkansas, a region that first became a popular vacation destination in the mid-nineteenth century. The first permanent girls' camp in Arkansas was Camp Miramichée, a private camp that opened in 1916 near the town of Hardy in northeast Arkansas. In 1920 Camp Miramichée was given to the YWCA. (Memphis 2005) The same year the Girl Scouts opened Kamp Kiwani across the road from Camp Miramichée. The Gypsy Camp for Girls, which opened in 1922, was the first known private girls' camp in northwest Arkansas, followed the next year by the creation of Camp Joyzelle, another private summer camp that opened next to the Monte Ne Resort near Rogers, Arkansas. (Lord 2012) All four of these camps operated successfully for approximately fifty years. The first to close was Camp Joyzelle, when the camp was sold to the Army Corps of Engineers in the early 1960s in preparation for the creation of Beaver Lake. (Bland 2009) Near Hardy, development pressure from a growing retirement community of Cherokee Village created pressure on the two girls' camps (as well as three boys' camps). In the early 1960s Kamp Kiwani sold off their land and relocated to Middleton, Tennessee, and the boys' camps relocated as well. (Memphis 2005) Camp Miramichée continued operations until the site was sold in 1975, at which point the camp was relocated to a new site further up the South Fork River. The Gypsy Camp was the last to close in 1978 and, of the first four permanent girls' camps built in Arkansas, is the only one that remains largely intact today.

Background: The Gypsy Camp was originally established as an artist's colony in 1921 by Weesie Griffith (1883-1933), the director of the art department at the University of Tulsa in Tulsa, Oklahoma. (Figure 31) Griffith told her soon to be husband John H. "Mr. Mac" McAllister (1862-1945) that she wanted to start an artists' retreat and summer camp. (Coe 1993) Two of McAllister's sons (from a previous marriage) had been out exploring and fishing on the Illinois River near Siloam Springs, Arkansas and told McAllister and Griffith of a scenic location they had discovered along the river. McAllister then drove his Cadillac from Tulsa to the site that would become the Gypsy Camp. By the end of the day he had purchased sixty-five acres from Walter and Georgia Goforth for approximately \$7,500. Prior to selling the property the Goforths grew corn in the

fields of the floodplain. Walter Goforth fed the corn to mules he kept beneath the large, overhanging bluffs. During World War I Goforth trained mules to help with the war effort. (Warden 2006)

The Gypsy Camp first opened as an artists' retreat in 1921. The first buildings constructed on the site served as cabins, indoor recreation space, and as a cafeteria for visiting artists. These buildings were Romany, Rover's Rest and Treetop. Following the conversion of the artists commune into a summer camp, several additional buildings were constructed to provide additional cabin and cafeteria space. These buildings were Gypsy, Vagabond Villa, and the Queen's Tavern. The buildings served as cabins, a cafeteria, recreation hall, and drama theater complete with an elevated stage and curtains. Ms. Griffith, the McAllisters, their friends, and art students would travel to northwest Arkansas from Tulsa and the surrounding region to relax and paint during the summer months. The following year the artists' retreat transformed into a summer camp called The Gypsy Camp for Girls. The thematic inspiration for the camp came from Griffith's exposure to gypsies and likely their camps during her European travels in the early 20th century. (Coe 2011) In 1922 and 23 the Gypsy Camp had one eight-week session per summer, open to girls ages seven to nineteen. In 1924 the camp expanded to eight four-week sessions for girls age eight through sixteen. (Figure 32) The idyllic landscape setting of the camp and the artistic programming that was McAllister's specialty were the major selling points in early promotional material:

They (the campers) live close to nature in the beautiful Ozark Hills; they swim, fish and boat on the sparkling Illinois River; they enjoy the sympathetic guidance of expert counselors and supervisors; their minds relieved from the restraint of school and city life, are skillfully guided along the creative lines through sketching and painting, through music clubs, through coaching in the dramatic arts and through expression of their own abilities in a dozen sports. (Brochure 1920s)

The new camp was a great success. Prospective campers travelled to the Ozark Mountains to attend the Gypsy Camp for Girls from Tulsa and other cities in Oklahoma, Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Texas, and Louisiana. Activities were expanded to include horseback riding, hiking, tennis, swimming, water skiing, archery, drama, music, arts and crafts, daytrips to the nearby town of Siloam Springs, and float trips down the Illinois River. Camp directors and staff – almost exclusively relatives and descendants of McAllister and Griffith, including the Coes – promised competent guidance, cultured companionship,

beautiful surroundings, comfortable lodges, wholesome food, and expert medical care. (Brochure 1930s) By 1930 the camp was fully developed. The camp buildings, and many site features including the stone wall (Figure 33) and a circular stone fire pit were in their current location. Minor changes were made during the mid-1950s when Bob Coe, the current owner, began managing the camp. One of the most visible changes was the replacement of the stone fire pit with a triangular one which was cast in place using concrete. This iconic camp feature remains in its original location. (Figure 34) During the mid-to-late 1960s the camp underwent widespread expansion and improvement. By this time, the camp structures were beginning to show signs of their age. Coe expanded the first floors of the cabin buildings with one-story lean-to additions which greatly increased their size. Tree top, the recreation building was reconstructed during this period and today, appears nearly identical to the original building.

The thematic program and traditions established in the 1920s continued for the duration of the camp's operation, not only activities and events, but in physical place as well. The physical setting of the camp, with its rustic structures nestled into a narrow, wooded ravine at the base of dramatic bluffs and at a wide bend in a slowly meandering Illinois River created the stage set on which the gypsy theme could be played out. An alluring, romantic image was enhanced by giving each camp structure an evocative name, such as Vagabond Villa or Rover's Rest, and even creating a song for each cabin. The tripod and kettle over a fire was established as the graphic symbol for the camp, appearing on the cover of the brochure that promoted the camp's first season in 1922. The camp fire ring served also as the heart and hub of camp activity in actual form. (Figure 35) Camp sessions ended with a "coronation" ceremony where the girls would wear Gypsy costumes and jewelry they had brought for the occasion. (Figure 36) The girls would sing and dance around the camp fire at this event and also at weekly campfire programs, as described in detail by a camp brochure:

The campers are divided into two traditional Gypsy Clans – the Calos (Orange) and the Tzigans (Reds). Each clan elects a Royal Family from its membership, consisting of a queen and a junior and senior princess. An elaborate coronation pageant, based on Gypsy lore, music, and folk dancing is staged at the end of camp, and awards are presented. The clans alternate in presenting the weekly campfire programs of camp tradition. Gypsy Costumes are worn on these occasions.(Brochure 1973)

Following the formative 1920s, the Gypsy Camp continued to have a strong following despite the Great Depression and World War II. After Weesie's death

in 1933, the camp was managed by John McAllister and four of his grown children (Weesie's stepchildren). When McAllister died in 1945, his children continued operations until 1955, when Bob Coe, grandson of John McAllister, and his wife Daisy inherited the property and took on the roles of running and restoring the camp. By this time the camp structures were in a state of decline, so the Coes took measures to stabilize and restore them. New camp features were also added in the 1960s, including the swimming pool and "Wildflower" sleep-out shelter located at the top of the big bluff. The 1950s and 1960s attracted a new generation, often daughters of former campers, and the number of campers increased during this period of rejuvenation.

Both the camp traditions and physical appearance remained remarkably intact through the nearly sixty years of operation. This is certainly due in part to the continuity in ownership and management. Attendance declined again in the late 1970s, however, this time most likely as the result of widespread cultural shifts. The camp finally ceased operations as a girls' camp following the summer of 1978. For several more years following the Gypsy Camp's closure, the camp served as an event center, catering to private functions such as business retreats, reunions, and other special events. (Figure 37)

Interest in the preservation of the camp has been widespread, due in large part to the concerns of generations of former campers. An effort to recognize the historic significance of the site began soon after the camp closed, prompted by a threat from Siloam Springs. The town was looking for a location to build a new water intake system as Frances Lake, a short distance downstream from the camp, had become severely silted in and polluted. The Gypsy Camp property was one of the potential locations, and the city planned to condemn the camp buildings on the property. After concerned individuals successfully listed the camp as a historic district on the National Register of Historic Places in 1987, the town selected an alternate location for the intake. Concerns for the future of the former camp have risen again over the past decade, due this time to suburban sprawl and the advanced age of Coe, who was born in 1921 and still lives on and cares for the property. Much of the camp remains intact; the camp's original bunk beds are still located in the cabins, and the dining hall is still fully stocked with dishes and dinnerware stacked on wood shelves. Despite his efforts, however, many of the wood structures have gradually deteriorated, and a major flood in 2011 heavily damaged many archival materials kept at the site. In 2006 the camp was listed as one of Arkansas' Top Ten Most Endangered Places by the Historic Preservation Alliance of Arkansas. This was followed in 2007 by the Gypsy Camp being listed by the Arkansas Chapter of the American Society of

Landscape Architects as the third most significant cultural landscape in District 3 needing documentation through the Historic American Landscape Survey program, preceded only by the civil-war era Prairie Grove Battlefield State Park and the Buffalo National River.

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July 26, 2013

3rd Place Winner - 2013 HALS Challenge: *Documenting the Cultural Landscapes of Women*



Figure 1 : The Gypsy Camp is located in a ravine adjacent to a dramatic 90 degree bend in the Illinois River. The large island which formed, following the loss of the Lake Frances dam, can be seen between the camp and the main river channel. The lake at the camp's edge was once 300 feet wide and deep enough to allow for water skiing. (Benton County, Arkansas GIS Map Viewer, 2012)



Figure 2: The Gypsy Camp is surrounded by a dramatic natural landscape. The property has nearly 150 feet of elevation change from its highest to lowest point. The camp buildings are nestled in a narrow ravine adjacent to the Illinois River valley. (B. Stinnett, 2011)



Figure 3: The Gypsy Camp swimming hole on the Illinois River as it appeared in the 1940s and 1950s. A limestone masonry retaining wall can be seen in the background along with a terraced concrete retaining wall. A wood pier with a ladder can be seen in the background. A wood crib structure for novice swimmers was once located adjacent to the concrete retaining wall and dock. (Courtesy of Bob Coe)



Figure 4: The Gypsy Camp sat at the eastern edge of Lake Frances. The photograph depicts the Gypsy Camp waterfront and the width of Lake Frances as it existed during the middle of the twentieth century (Ca. 1965) Bob Coe, the camp's owner, can be seen giving rides in his motorboat while campers look on from rowboats and from the shore. (Courtesy of Bob Coe)



Figure 5: Majestic limestone bluffs are located on the hillside directly above the Gypsy Camp. Artifacts discovered beneath the bluffs indicate that they were once inhabited by Native Americans. Historically, the bluffs were used to shelter domestic animals including mules and horses. The bluffs are currently used as storage for salvaged architectural materials and the camp's collection of vintage farm wagons. (B. Stinnett, 2011)



Figure 6: Diagram of Gypsy Camp buildings, structures and landscape features. The camp buildings and structures are indicated by white circles containing letters. Significant landscape features are indicated by black circles containing numbers. (Benton County, Arkansas GIS Map Viewer, 2011)



Figure 7: (A) The two story Coe House was constructed in 1928. The building was built to replace a log structure on the site that burned in 1927. The building was constructed to serve as a year-round residence. (B. Stinnett, 2011)



Figure 8: (B) The "Royal Hut" was constructed in two stages. The one story portion was built in 1923. The two story portion containing the living quarters was constructed in 1928. The building was built to serve as a year-round residence for the camp founders. The building served as the home of the camp's owner until the recent construction of a new residence. (B. Stinnett, 2011)



Figure 9: (C) Romany Inn(Top) & Vagabond Villa(Bottom) were constructed as cabins for campers. The cabin is a rustic board and batten wood framed structure on a wood pier foundation. A shed roof addition was added to the first floor in the late 1960s. The location of Romany Inn and Vagabond Villa is just outside of the ravine. The cabin is situated adjacent to the Coe House on the north slope of the Illinois River Valley. (B. Stinnett, 2011)



Figure 10: (D) Upper and Lower Gypsy cabins were constructed as summer housing for campers. The cabin is a rustic board and batten wood framed structure on a wood pier foundation. A shed roof addition was added to the first floor in the late 1960s. The cabin building is located on the west slope of the ravine adjacent to the canteen. (B. Stinnett, 2011)



Figure 11: (E) Upper and Lower Rover's Rest were constructed as cabins for campers. The cabin is a rustic board and batten wood framed structure on a wood pier foundation. A shed roofed addition was added to the first floor in the late 1960s. The cabin is located on the east slope of the ravine adjacent to the Queen's Tavern and Tree Top. (B. Stinnett,



Figure 12: The lower floor of the Romany Inn and Vagabond Villa cabin still contains bunk beds along with the painted names, dates, and messages of several generations of young campers. (K. Erdman, 2011)



Figure 13: (F) The three story Tree Top Inn/ Devil's Den was built in 1921. The structure has wood framing on a limestone foundation. The building was originally constructed to serve as both a dining facility and cabin, but upon the construction of the Queen's Tavern, the building served as the arts and crafts hall, a cabin, and the nurse's quarters. The building was reconstructed in the 1960s. (B. Stinnett, 2011)



Figure 14: (G) The two story "Queen's Tavern" was constructed in 1925. The building served as a dining and recreation hall. A drama theater complete with a stage and curtains was located on the second floor. A kitchen and dining room were located on the first floor. The camp's collection of canoes and rowboats can be seen to the west of the Queen's Tavern. (B. Stinnett, 2011)



Figure 15: Gypsy themed murals dating from the 1920s are located on the rear (north) wall of the dining room in the Queen's Tavern. The murals were originally installed in the first dining hall (Tree Top) but were relocated following the construction of the Queen's Tavern. (K. Erdman, 2011)



Figure 16: Popular Gypsy Camp activities were depicted in the colorful murals. The murals, along with the entire first floor of the Queen's Tavern, sustained heavy damage in the 2011 flood. (K. Erdman, 2011)



Figure 17: (H) Two nearly identical restroom/shower structures were constructed in the 1960s. (B. Stinnett, 2011)



Figure 18: (I) The Well House and Canteen were constructed Ca. 1921. The building has a wooden frame with a vertical pine slab veneer on a concrete slab foundation. (B. Stinnett, 2011)



Figure 19: (J) The sleep-out cabin known as "Wildflower" was constructed Ca. 1970. The structure is wood framed on a pier foundation. The structure was used for weekly sleep-outs. (B. Stinnett, 2011)



Figure 20: (K) The Indian House was constructed Ca. 1910. The structure served as a gate house and residence prior to falling into disrepair. The structure was razed in 2011. (B. Stinnett, 2011)



Figure 21: (L) The River View Cabin was constructed in 2011 as the camp owner's residence. The river view cabin is similar in appearance to the historic buildings in its elevated hillside setting, architectural form, and the use of half log siding on the exterior facades. (B. Stinnett, 2011)



Figure 22: (1) The triangular campfire structure was constructed from pre-cast concrete Ca. 1960 in the location of an earlier stone lined camp fire ring. The campfire ring is located at the mouth of the ravine adjacent to the Illinois River. (B. Stinnett, 2011)



Figure 23: The tripod with a kettle set over the campfire was used as the camp's logo from the earliest years and remained in use throughout much of the camp's history. The logo was emblazoned on patches as seen in this 1944 Gypsy Camp patch. (Courtesy of Bob Coe)



Figure 24: (2) The mortared limestone fieldstone wall, arched gateway, and rectangular goldfish pond was constructed in 1921 by David Gettes, a Scottish immigrant and the current owner's great uncle. The pathway in the foreground leads to the triangular fire ring and concrete retaining wall. (B. Stinnett, 2011)



Figure 25: (3) The service vehicle access bridge over the drainage channel, and one of two concrete pedestrian bridges are located adjacent to the stone wall and gateway. The drainage channel is essential in keeping the Gypsy Camp dry during wet weather. (K. Erdman, 2011)



Figure 26: (4) The concrete retaining wall was constructed Ca. 1923. The entire structure is exposed as a result of the river returning to its pre-lake level due to the loss of the Lake Frances Dam. (B. Stinnett, 2011)



Figure 27: (5) The gateway is an important landmark on Highway 59. The Gypsy Camp gateway has greeted visitors to the camp for many years. The gateway has been replaced several times as a result of natural decay, and damage from being hit by vehicles. (B. Stinnett, 2011)



Figure 28: (6) The Gypsy Camp swimming pool was constructed in the 1960s adjacent to the Indian House. The wood shelter in the foreground is a non-contributing contemporary addition. The floodplain can be seen in the distance from the pool's elevated location. (B. Stinnett, 2011)



Figure 29: (7) The Gypsy Camp tennis courts, located in the middle of the large flood plain, were constructed in 1960. The Gypsy Camp and the prominent limestone bluffs can be seen in the background. (B. Stinnett, 2011)



Figure 30: The majority of the Gypsy Camp is located within the Illinois River's one-hundred year flood plain. This location has resulted in the seasonal inundation of portions of the camp property during the spring months throughout its history. During the spring of 2011 a 500 year flood event took place. Many lower lying structures which had never before flooded, received significant water damage. The image above was taken from the front steps of the Queen's Tavern approximately twenty-four hours before the flood waters peaked. The river rose approximately six feet above the level shown in the image. (B. Stinnett, 2011)



Figure 31: A 1920s image of Mrs. Weesie Griffith McAllister (left side, rear) with an art class at the Gypsy Camp. The Illinois River can be seen in the background. (Courtesy of Bob Coe)



Figure 32: Campers sing and dance while dressed as gypsies in the 1930s. The stone wall and archway can be seen behind the campers. (Courtesy of Bob Coe)



Figure 33: The vernacular design of the camp buildings is strongly tied to the dramatic topography of the surrounding dynamic landscape. The concrete drainage infrastructure and one of two associated concrete bridges can be seen on the right side of the photograph. The stone gateway and wall were constructed in 1921 and remain in good condition. The goldfish pond is located at the end of the wall near the Queen's Tavern. (B. Stinnett, 2011)



Figure 34: The triangular fire ring sits at the mouth of the ravine, adjacent to the banks of the Illinois River. The central location provides panoramic views of the Illinois River and surrounding valley, along with the rolling hills of the Ozark Mountains. The Coe House can be seen overlooking the river in the background. (B. Stinnett, 2011)

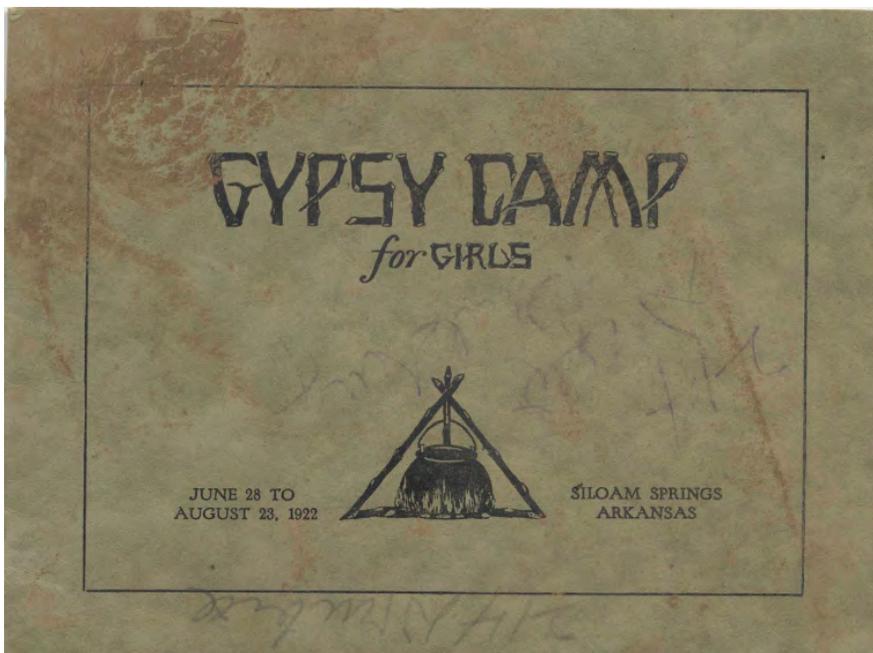


Figure 35: The 1922 camp brochure was one of the first publications to display what would become the Gypsy Camp's iconic logo. Dirt on the brochure is an example of the water damage that occurred to historic camp documents as a result of the 2011 flood. (Courtesy of Bob Coe)



Figure 36: Several girls pose in gypsy themed costumes while the campers sit on benches surrounding the iconic triangular fire ring in a Ca. 1967 photograph. The camp was once blanketed with large shade trees. The terraced concrete retaining wall at the edge of the lake can be seen in the top right corner. (Courtesy of Bob Coe)



Figure 38: A publicity photograph (Ca. 1950) shows campers in gypsy costumes dancing near the fire ring. The image shows the appearance of Romany Inn and Vagabond Villa prior to the late 1960s shed roof addition. (Courtesy of Bob Coe)



Figure 39: Campers ride horses along the camp's entrance drive. The Royal Hut, the entrance drive, and a portion of the adjacent terraced sitting area can be seen in the Ca. 1960 photograph. The log building was constructed on a hillside overlooking the entry road. The building's location offers panoramic views of the river and agricultural fields. The fields surrounding the camp were once used for recreational activities. (Courtesy of Bob Coe)



Figure 40: The camp as seen from the Coe House. Romany Inn and Vagabond Villa can be seen in the foreground overlooking the camp and the Illinois River. The shed roof addition was added during renovations in the late 1960s. The triangular fire ring, stone archway, and the contemporary cabin can be seen in the distance. (B. Stinnett, 2011)



Figure 41: Ca. 1937 Gypsy Camp Brochure (Side 1) (Courtesy of Bob Coe)

Location

Gypsy Camp is located six miles from Rhinow, Oklahoma, in the foothills of the Spinks. It can be reached by direct rail connections at the Kansas City Southern from points in Louisiana, Missouri, Texas, and the Southwest and South. This makes the problem to visit their girls solved. During the summer most enjoy the beauties of Gypsy Camp without the loss of school time. A road built May 1936 also leads from Rhinow Station to Gypsy Camp.

Gypsy Camp has the name of rural school by all standards. It has modern heating and air conditioning, tennis courts and an extensive athletic field. A location so suitable for a camp is seldom found.

It houses an equipped and when a hundred cheering girls from the best families from the South and Southwest make it their summer home, swimming and playing, studying these beauties. It is no wonder that girls and adults from some

Activities

The girls at Gypsy Camp are given the opportunity to enjoy some creative work which they may pursue during the summer under expert guidance.

Handicrafts, sewing, drama, the girls in various handicrafts, writing, painting, drawing, water colors, embroidery and other sports. Through an outstanding staff, in the girls camp, the girls receive instruction in the art of making dolls, oil and water colors, model airplanes and bullet pointing in drama.

A prominent part of Gypsy Camp is given to dancing. Instruction in tap, jazz, square, social, modern and ballroom dancing is given.

Page and stories are presented by the Dramatic Art group under the auspices of the Girls Dramatic Club.

All these activities are so fitted into the day's program that the day passes in a whirl of enjoyable entertainment, rather than tedium.

The camp is divided into two sections, the senior camp and the junior camp.

Girls from 11 to 14 years of age are in the Junior Camp. Above all, these girls are taught self-reliance and the ability to get along with one another.

The Junior Camp is composed of girls from 7 to 12 years of age. In this group is developed the ability of organization and the ability to care for themselves. Gypsy Camp not only makes days of achievement but it also makes days that will be remembered as a strong character, self-reliance and self confidence. In Gypsy Camp a girl finds her place of leadership naturally.

These camps present a complete course of instruction among the girls. All types of girls are drawn into these camps and some leading personalities are made.

In the days spent in swimming and hiking and many other activities, the girls get a better outlook on life. Their character is strengthened morally, physically and mentally.

Each committee of the Junior Camp is chosen for her Rhinow in the field of high-class winter work for girls of that age.

Each day spent in one of these camps is one that will be recalled with pleasure in the other years.

With the girls working one side of Gypsy Camp and the sparkling Rhinow River on the other side, no wonder these girls like to call Gypsy Camp their camp.

Figure 42: Ca. 1937 Gypsy Camp Brochure (Side 2) (Courtesy of Bob Coe)

For Days of Fun— Ozark Playgrounds

It's lots of fun, adventure for the happy days to come and then when they arrive to spend them under perfect summer skies, abundant sunshine, fishing, and hiking.

With the day's pleasantly warm and the subtle delicately cool, the girls enjoy the best of Gypsy vacation with its close relation to nature.

THE DAY PROGRAM

9:00 Making camp, 7:30—Setting up camp and morning trip, 7:45—Breakfast, followed by a period of packing, the bus in order by 8:00 A.M. Leave back camp, Arriving at playground, 11:00. Rejuvenating, 12:30—Lunch.

1:30—Rest hour, 3:00—Swim, picnic, fishing, crafts, hiking, etc. 5:00—Evening, 8:00—Supper, 7:45—9:00. Devoted to song and the story writing, theatricals, readings, etc. and and adequate practice, usually by 9:00—Light out.

We strive to make each day one that will be remembered. Gypsy Camp activities, good things very important in building a satisfactory character. They have given an Gypsy Camp to the young sunlight and moon nights with nothing in your mind are helpful for the soul as well as good for the mind and body.

Fun, good stable an opportunity to come to best take place of leader help among girls of two rows type for social activities, recreation among respective times, all these Gypsy Camp offers each girl.

We strive to make our camp a pleasant place for every camper, a place where she will feel that she is at home and among friends. There are no exclusive organizations or clubs. We try to be just one big family.

To maintain the outdoor atmosphere, and you provide comfortable and safe lodgings for girls who are accustomed to the clean, Gypsy Camp has several camp buildings. All these are of permanent construction and are attractive. Each sleeping house is situated on ground so that the girls may sleep in the open without inconvenience. They are furnished with good steel woven wire spring cots and comfortable side mattress pads. Each of approximately the same size, neatly and cleanly house.

Competent, Interested Instructors Supervise Play at Gypsy Camp

LAVERS ARE AVERAGE

The camp fee includes instructions in all things work and living experience except beauty.

Housework, cooking, etc., are arranged for at the girl home.

All camp fees must be paid upon arrival of camp.

No refunds will be made except in cases of such rare happenings.

Any special activities for parties must be arranged for through the camp manager.

IMMEDIATE AND DIRECTION

All camp activities and outdoor sports are directed by counselors who devote their entire time to the interests of the girls.

Every possible effort is made to develop good, strong character, self-reliance, pleasure of mind and body and compensation so that each girl will be better fitted to meet the business and social obligations of life.

(Camp activities and sometimes organized the camp Council. The counselors are chosen for their ability, ability to give and ability of teaching, their ability to manage camp girls, and their knowledge and love of the girl. The counselor for every eight girls (usually 10-12) is chosen for each girl.) The beginning instructor is an instructor in the Red Cross life saving course. A competent life saver is on duty at all swimming hours.

The goal is to help the girl to be self-reliant. It is the aim for each girl to develop and the ability to analyze of habits of thought and speech, health and social life.

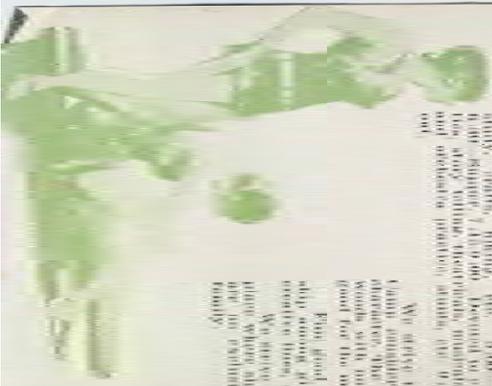





Figure 43: Ca. 1937 Gypsy Camp Brochure (Side 3) (Courtesy of Bob Coe)

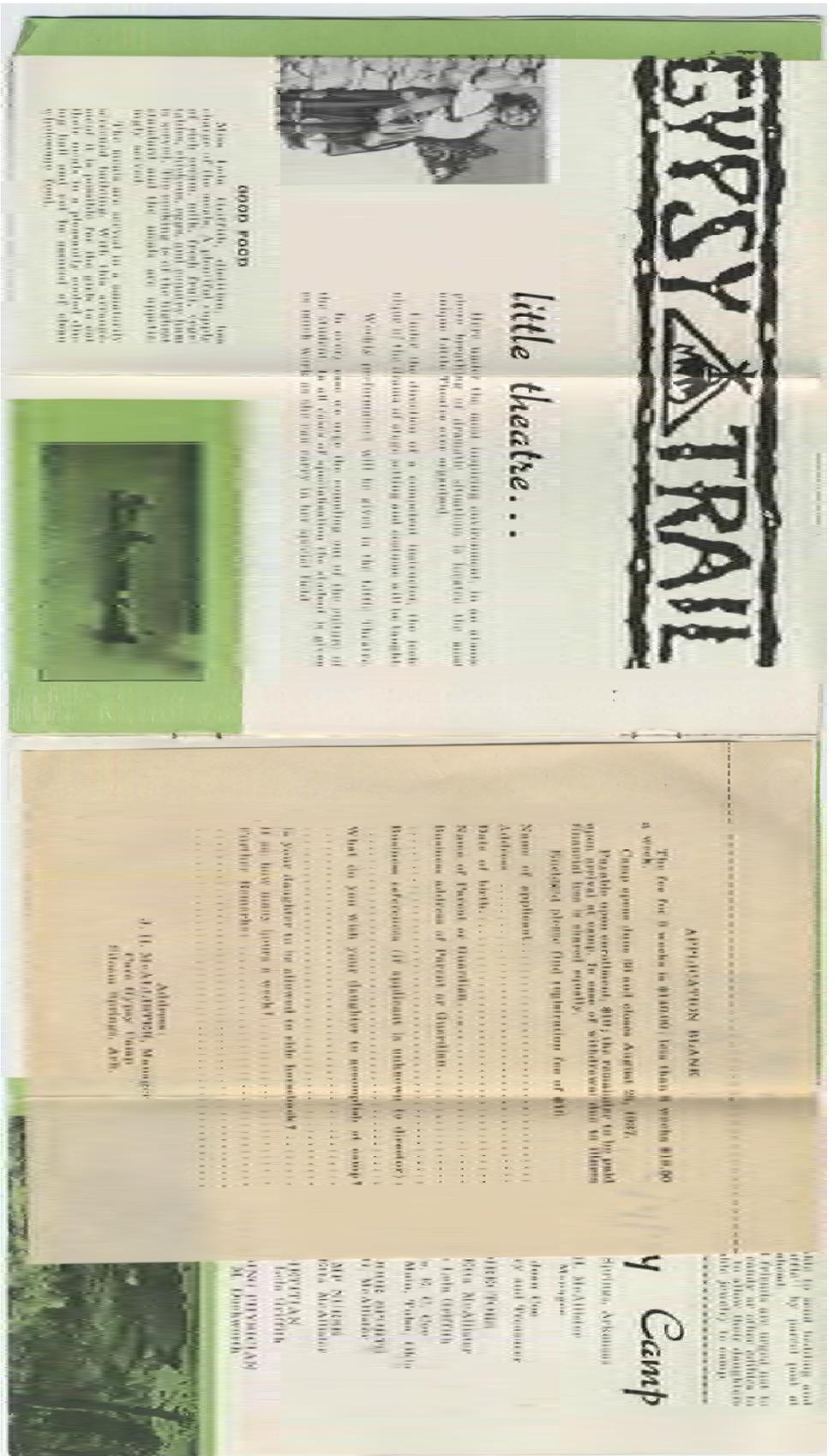


Figure 44: Ca. 1937 Gypsy Camp Brochure (Side 4) (Courtesy of Bob Coe)



Figure 45: Ca. 1937 Gypsy Camp Brochure (Side 4.5) (Courtesy of Bob Coe)

General Information

WHEN: APRIL 17 - JULY 14, 1973
Tuition for 4 weeks \$100.00
 Tuition includes living expenses and class instruction in classes offered.
 \$50.00 of tuition is payable with registration and the remainder upon entrance to Camp.
 Unnecessary spending is discouraged by the Director. It is customary to place a \$25 monetary fund in the Camp office to cover for Cash materials, laundry, small personal needs. Any balance in the fund is refunded.
 Parents are notified immediately in case of serious illness. We practice safety first always and nevertheless, however, we do not assume responsibility for accidents and illness. The Children's Hospital, Shreve Springs, is available in case of emergency. Special medication, X-rays, fees, and outside hospital service are the responsibility of the parents.
 Campers are required to furnish a certificate of health from a parent.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:
MR. AND MRS. BOB COE
GYPSY CAMP FOR GIRLS
SILGUM SPRINGS, ARKANSAS 72161
MC 301 524-1829

WHERE:
 Gypsy Camp is located in the beautiful foothills of the Ozark's about 25 miles south of Shreve Springs, on state Highway 59, and twenty-five miles northwest of Fayetteville, home of the University of Arkansas.



WILDFLOWER—new sleep-out cabin on top of the high hill.



"CHOW" line



Arts and Crafts



Gypsy camp ground by the legendary "old vine trees"



Interior of one of the centrally located bath-houses



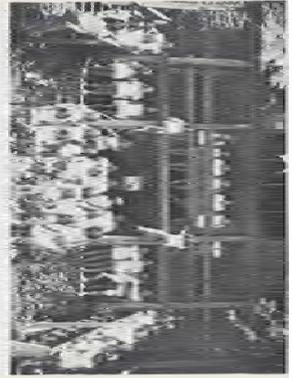
Lined up for art-studio



Camp Gypsy

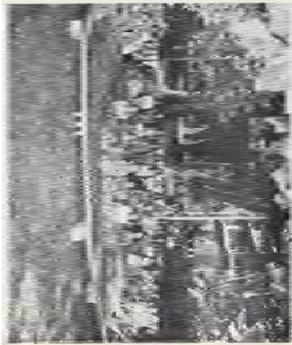
FOR GIRLS
 since 1921
*Where the Ozark's is winding
 and the Ozark hills look down.*

Figure 46: 1973 Gypsy Camp Brochure (Side 1) (Courtesy of Bob Coe)



BOB COE — Director and Owner
 Mrs. BOB (DAISY) COE — Associate Director
ANN EVERDEE — Warden Director, Calverton, Texas
LINA WATERS — Dentist, Tulsa, Oklahoma
 Gypsy Camp has been owned and operated by the same family for three generations. 1973 will be our 52nd year as a summer camp, exclusively for girls—ages 8 to 16. We are the only private camp for girls in the state of Arkansas.

The campers are divided into two traditional Gypsy Clans—the Gypsy Clans and the Tiger Clans. Each clan elects a Royal Family from its membership, consisting of a queen and a junior and senior princess. An adequate education program, based on Gypsy lore, music, and folk dancing, is staged at the end of camp, and awards are presented.



All the cabins are two-story buildings which have been rebuilt and restored to retain their rustic appearance. All are well furnished with double beds, army cots and comfortable mattresses, desks and built-in cupboards. Each cabin accommodates eight to ten girls of approximately the same age and a counselor, who is always on hand for the protection as well as the pleasure of her charges.

Any girls injured to the care of Gypsy Camp is assured six weeks necessary assistance, first-aid, parent guidance, second, cultural, companionship. Third, beautiful surroundings. Fourth, amiable lodges. Fifth, wholesome food. Sixth, skillfully planned programs.



CABIN NAMES
 Upper floor's Red
 Lower floor's Red
 Devil's Den
 Angel's Alley
 Vacation Villa
 Romney Inn
 Upper Gypsy
 Lower Gypsy



- ACTIVITIES**
- Water Sports
 - Land Sports
 - Dancing
 - Crafts
 - Hay Rides
 - Road Trips
 - Cook-outs
 - Trips to Town

Cabin living requires immediate care of quarters, and each girl has a daily chore that is her responsibility. In keeping up her end of the Merit Point system in her cabin, each cabin is designated by a unique name, and each has its own song.



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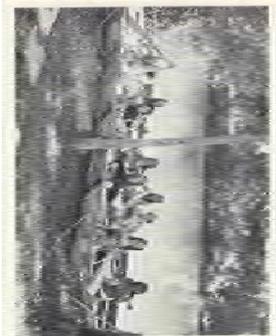
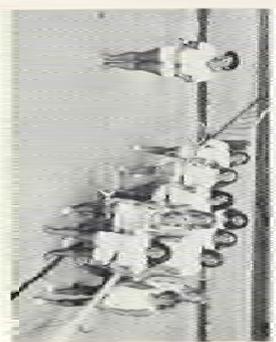


Figure 47: 1973 Gypsy Camp Brochure (Side 2) (Courtesy of Bob Coe)