

# Blue Hills History 7 – Boy Scouts at the Blue Hills

## Boy Scouts at the Blue Hills

In a previous article we saw that “Between 1911–1923 permission was granted for the Newsboy’s Association, Boy Scouts of America, Appalachian Mountain Club, and the Young Men’s Christian Association to establish camps” at the Blue Hills.<sup>i</sup>

Apparently, for the Boy Scouts, it started when they requested to camp near the Charles River.

‘The Board gave a hearing to Ormond Loomis and Charles B. Mason relative to the use of certain land of the Commission near Riverside Recreation Grounds, Charles River Reservation, for an encampment of Boy Scouts of America. During the conference it was suggested by the Board that there were certain places in Blue Hills Reservation which might be found better adapted to the purpose in view and that it would be well for the representatives of the movement in question to visit Blue Hills Reservation and further communicate with the Board in relation to this matter.’<sup>ii</sup>

The Scouts apparently, after looking at the Blue Hills, agreed as then there is a record of another Commissioner’s meeting:

“Boy Scouts of America, Ormond Loomis, Field Secretary, dated January 15, relative to use of a part of the Pierce Devise, for encampment.

VOTED that the Secretary be authorized to issue the permit requested, the same to be exercised subject at all times to the satisfaction and approval of the Superintendent of Blue Hills Division.”

And finally, one last Commissioner’s meeting to ‘work out some issues’:

Boy Scouts of America, dated June 3, relative to modification of certain rules governing the use of Blue Hills Reservation during the encampment of the Boy Scouts at said reservation.

“VOTED that the Secretary be directed to reply to letter of Harold Peabody, of ‘the Executive Committee of the Boy Scouts of America, dated June 3. 1912, relative to the use of Blue Bills Reservation during the encampment of the Boy Scouts at said Reservation, that the Board cannot give permission to enter or leave the Reservation by the path through the Aldrich Estate, said estate being private property; that the Board will permit the organization to sell and dispense to the boys. Scout Masters, and persons directly connected with the organization, camping necessities, including food, equipment and stationery, but the Board does not feel like permitting the distribution of circulars and pamphlets; that the Board will permit the attending physician to have in his possession such articles and medicines of any character as he deems necessary for medical purposes; that the Board will permit lectures and illustrated talks to the boys, provided such lectures are given to the boys in assembly, and not in the presence of the public generally; that the Board will permit scout drill and procession, and the marching in patrol formation on those parts of the Reservation where the public are not assembled as spectators or otherwise; that the Board will also permit the use of the bugle in the drill and exercises of the scouts, but would not permit the use of any other musical instruments, except on the camp grounds, and then not after nine o'clock in the evening or before seven o'clock in the morning; and that the Board will permit the display of camp

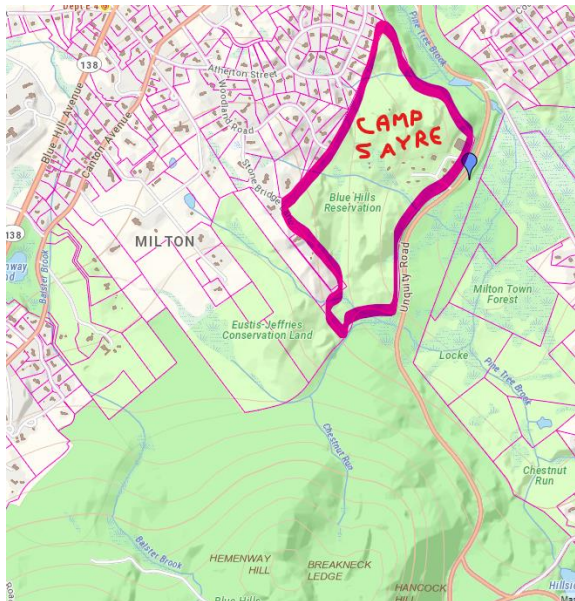
signs on the site allowed for said encampment. The permission hereby given must be exercised at all times in a manner approved by the Superintendent of said Blue Hills Reservation.”

Apparently it was a success as the final related note: The Boy Scouts requested, and the Commissioners approved, using the facilities again the next year, “...on the same terms as last year.”

So apparently at this point the scouts were just using the land and pitching their tents, etc. for a brief encampment. Eventually they would establish a more permanent facility next door to the Blue Hills Reservation, where the ‘current’ Boy Scout Camp is located. So, let’s look at that...

### Camp Sayre

Camp Sayre, was not ‘part of’ the Blue Hills, it was an approximately 108 acre Boy Scout camp located adjacent to the Blue Hills at 411 Unquity Road, Milton, MAiii. (Just north of intersection 1214, on that same, western, side of Unquity Road.) The camp, which opened in 1952iv had six winterized and heated cabins with capacities of 12-22, each with a gas stove and refrigerator. There was also a fully-heated 100-person capacity lodge/dining hall with complete kitchen facilities. There were nine Adirondack-style lean-tos with fire pits.v



Oliver (MA GIS program) map of area

vs.

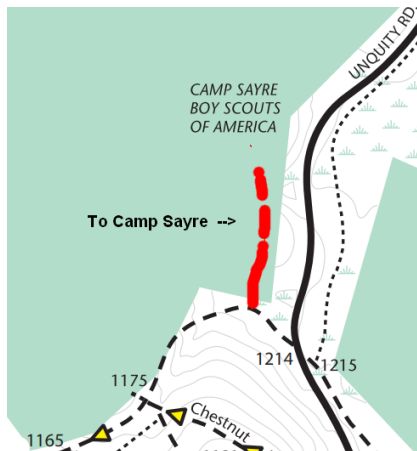
DCR 2016 Blue Hills Map

Note, the stub trail @ 1175 was removed from the 2020 map



The Camp Sayre map of facilities

“The camp was donated to the Boy Scouts by Elliot Henderson, and is named after his son. [David Sayre Henderson, a Boy Scout who died in 1941 at the age of 16.] The camp was originally used as a training ground for scoutmasters “before they took the Scouts on more robust camping trips to the White Mountains.”<sup>viii</sup>



When the “Red Line the Blue Hills” hikers hike Border Path near Unquity road we see intersection 1175. Two of the trails (to 1165 and 1214) are Border Path, along the edge of the Blue Hills Reservation. A third (Chestnut Run Path) leads toward Hemenway Hill. The other trail, in just a few feet, leads to a “Private Property” sign, where we stop. This trail continues out to private property on Canton Ave.

There is also a small, less noticeable, trail closer to 1214. This trail leads to Camp Sayre, and this was a route for the scouts to get from Camp Sayre into the Blue Hills to hike.

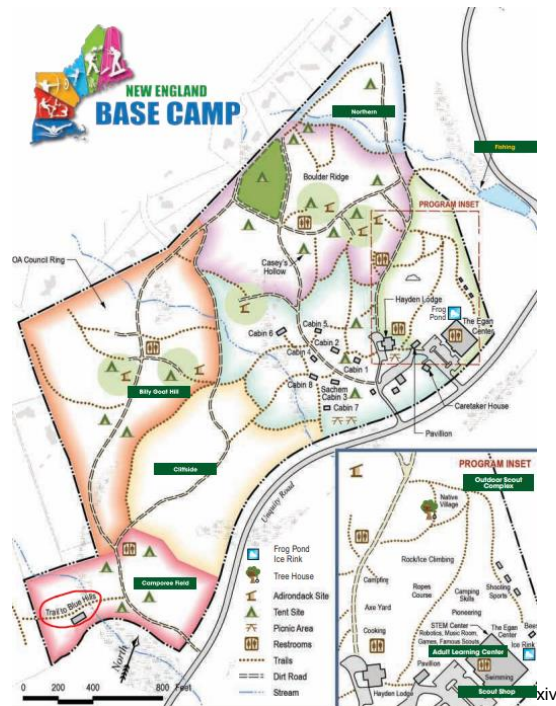
Around 2005-2007 the facility was expanded, and an Olympic-sized indoor pool added. However, cost overruns (\$4 million → \$7.5 million, a \$3.5 million increase) led to the facility almost being sold.<sup>ix</sup> A lawsuit was filed against the builder, and eventually the Scouts managed to hold on to the property, however this has all brought about changes.<sup>xi</sup>

### NE Base Camp

Camp Sayre served almost exclusively as a Boy Scouts of America facility for more than 50 years, with some access allowed to private groups, such as the Girls Scout and churches. About 2015, however, they decided to open to the general public for weekend programs under the name of New England Base Camp at Camp Sayre, and is presently just being called “New England Base Camp”.

Offerings at the 108-acre facility normally<sup>xii</sup> include an outdoors ropes challenge course, plus classes in archery, edible plant identification, building with hand tools, cooking outdoors, starting a fire without matches, and introductory ice climbing. There’s also the indoor Olympic-sized pool.

Specialty programs include high ropes leadership training for all skill levels and ages, guided canoe trips, and an outdoor leadership training program. Some offerings are ideal for kids' birthday parties; some are clearly aimed at adults; others are open to anyone hoping to master a given skill.<sup>xiii</sup>



So, when the pandemic settles back down, maybe someday you'll want to investigate NE Base Camp. It could be an interesting way to get some people involved with the outdoors.

Bob Vogel

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- <sup>i</sup> <https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2016/10/mz/section-2-blue-hills-reservation.pdf>
- <sup>ii</sup> [https://archive.org/stream/metropolitanpark12mass/metropolitanpark12mass\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/metropolitanpark12mass/metropolitanpark12mass_djvu.txt)
- <sup>iii</sup> The [Yankee Clipper Council](#) and [Boston Minuteman Council](#) merged into the Spirit of Adventure Council on July 1, 2015 - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spirit\\_of\\_Adventure\\_Council](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spirit_of_Adventure_Council)
- <sup>iv</sup> [https://archive.org/stream/thompsonslandb56thom/thompsonslandb56thom\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/thompsonslandb56thom/thompsonslandb56thom_djvu.txt)
- <sup>v</sup> <https://travelsdocbox.com/Camping/75482774-Nanepashemet-lodge-158-order-of-the-arrow-where-to-go-camping-guide.html>
- <sup>vi</sup> [http://maps.massgis.state.ma.us/map\\_ol/oliver.php](http://maps.massgis.state.ma.us/map_ol/oliver.php)
- <sup>vii</sup> <https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2016/10/wj/blue-hills-trail-map-2016.pdf>
- <sup>viii</sup> <https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/regionals/south/2015/03/01/move-boy-scouts-camp-for-all-seasons/yeRbQFNP3vkg5IGkEp29AI/story.html>
- <sup>ix</sup> <https://www.bostonherald.com/2008/11/09/boy-scouts-need-rescue/>
- <sup>x</sup> <http://www.colliersmg.com/email/MinutemanSite/MinutemanSite.html>
- <sup>xi</sup> [http://archive.boston.com/business/globe/articles/2007/09/08/scouts\\_sue\\_over\\_state\\_of\\_headquarters/](http://archive.boston.com/business/globe/articles/2007/09/08/scouts_sue_over_state_of_headquarters/)
- <sup>xii</sup> Like most everything else, NE Base Camp is currently closed.
- <sup>xiii</sup> <https://www.outdoors.org/articles/amc-outdoors/scouting-out-new-england-base-camp-at-camp-sayre>
- <sup>xiv</sup> <https://www.newenglandbasecamp.org/lodging/picture-of-campsite-map/>
- <sup>xv</sup> <https://www.newenglandbasecamp.org/take-a-look/base-camp-map/>