

# The Camp Sequanota Story



**1947-2022**

## **Introduction**

It is the people. Camp Sequanota is made up of 413 mountainous acres, 40 buildings, a huge pool, athletic fields, rock formations, pristine streams, and beautiful views. However, it is the people who have made Camp Sequanota the special place that it is. For three quarters of a century, people who care about connecting Christ, creation, and community have stewarded and overseen its growth and development, so guests and campers could be transformed by the Sequanota experience. These pages have been written and compiled to share the history and ministry of this sacred mountain retreat, yet we always remember that it is the people who make this place come to life. These are the stories of just some of the many people of faith throughout the years who have loved God, believed in the value of camping ministry, and committed their time, energy, and resources to making this holy ground so special.

In this most recent edit of our history, we hope to convey the significant impact of Sequanota's leadership. The camp's Directors and Boards of Directors have created and sustained this outdoor ministry from its inception. Looking back at our history, when strong relationships existed between the camp executive and the Board of Directors, Sequanota's ministry flourished. The people of the Allegheny Synod (previously Allegheny Conference) provided strong leaders who guided Sequanota throughout the years. As you read these pages, you will see how their leadership, faith, and commitment made this camp what it is today.

With every anniversary celebration, Camp Sequanota's story will continue to be about the special people who have contributed to this ministry in unique ways, responding to the gifts and challenges of their time. It is the people of this Allegheny region who have shared their time, talents, and treasure who have made Sequanota soar. Their commitment to loving God and serving others has impacted thousands of children, youth, and adults. Here we try to share some of the history of these individuals and the accomplishments they achieved together. The various authors and editors of this book could never capture every name of those who have made a special impact. In our well intentioned but imperfect collection of facts, dates, and details, we may have overlooked some of the unsung stewards of love and care who walked, played, and taught on this holy hill. However, their story lives on in you. Please share your story of them with us and others so that the legacy of Sequanota continues.

### **The Beginning and Early Accomplishments**

"Accept O Lord God Almighty, this ground: let Thy blessing descend upon it as the dew from heaven that here may raise adoration, thanksgiving and the praise of Thy holy name; that here may be a place where Thy honor dwelleth and where young and old may commune with Thee and be Led by Thy Spirit to be more holy consecrated to Thee and to the Christian way of life; and we beseech Thee let Thy benediction ever abide upon this place and all who gather here for worship and training and communion with Thee, through Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Amen."



With this prayer of Dr. Theodore Buch, Camp Sequanota was dedicated on Sunday afternoon, June 22, 1947. A long time dream now became a reality. Lutherans living in the Allegheny hills and valleys of Pennsylvania now would have their own facilities for summer camping. It would no longer be necessary to rent the buildings of other denominations or send children many miles away from their homes for a Christian camping experience. The Lutheran churches of the area had long recognized the importance of church camping programs. Unlike many summer camps where recreation comprised almost the total emphasis, the United Lutheran Church in America had developed a four-fold camping program which stressed the spiritual, mental, social, and physical well being of youth.

Believing strongly in the benefits of camping to the church, the Johnstown Lutheran Pastoral Association at a meeting at First Lutheran Church, Johnstown, on February 4, 1946, appointed a committee of four pastors to investigate the possibility of establishing a camp in the Allegheny Conference area (Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Centre, Clearfield, Huntingdon, & Somerset Counties). This committee was comprised of Pastors George I. Melhorn (Moxham, Johnstown), chairman; Theodore Buch (Zion, Johnstown), John Stambaugh (Jennerstown parish), and John Foerster (Grace, Stoystown). All members of this committee had considerable Christian camping experience. The committee, convinced that there would be no argument about the necessity for a camp, began immediately to investigate possible camp locations. They visited many sites in the six county area of the conference and finally decided to recommend a site known locally as the Weimer tract, lying northwest of Jennerstown in the Laurel Hill mountains. This tract was comprised of 145 acres and was priced at \$2,500.00. The committee chairman, Rev. George I. Melhorn, gives the following account of the committee's search for a camp site.

"No one can appreciate the task of the committee unless he himself has started on a similar campaign or trip. The committee spent a matter of months viewing sites of all descriptions. Water was one of the many drawbacks. Mine waters contaminated many streams, springs were inadequate, wells were of little or no value. In the early spring of 1946 we started for a site we had heard about through Pastor John Stambaugh. We left the Old Lincoln Highway (U. S. Route 30) west of Jennerstown, about two miles, and followed the mountain in a northern direction. We traveled an old log road which led us farther and farther into the underbrush. The previous night had brought one of those early spring rains, the kind of rain in which the heavens just seem to open and leave everything fall out of them. This region had been logged off perhaps 20 years previously, and there was evidence of a brush fire in the early 1930s. The old roads were still there, but grown over from disuse, and a stream of water flowed down the wagon ruts on either side. Progress was slow, and with the guide having made a wrong turn, we found we had spent an hour getting where we were told we could reach in a matter of twenty minutes. There was none who complained, however, for we were intrigued by the rugged beauty surrounding us, and the signs of approaching spring that we beheld on every hand. Once we dropped into a small rock gorge or canyon. Nature had scraped out a gorge here, and we could hear the water running under the rocks as we walked over them. Then we came to a huge spring, Tomahawk Spring, which

# Lutheran Training Camp

BEING DEVELOPED

ON A SITE

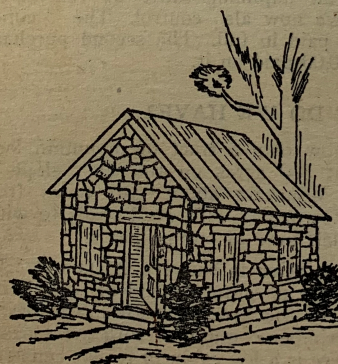
FORMERLY KNOWN AS

## The Weimer Tract

NEAR

JENNERSTOWN, SOMERSET

PENNSYLVANIA



### WHAT HAVE WE SPENT?

The Treasurer's report answers this question.

#### TREASURER'S REPORT

October 26, 1946.

##### Receipts

Contributions .....	\$5,386.00
Loan .....	1,000.00
Total .....	\$6,386.00

##### Expenditures

Purchase of land .....	\$3,000.00
Other expenses .....	76.92
Total .....	\$3,076.92
Balance on hand .....	\$3,309.08

##### Contributions from Churches

Moxham .....	\$ 550.00
Zion .....	660.00
Stoystown .....	85.00
Jennerstown .....	385.00
Davidsville .....	155.00
New Centerville .....	300.00
Trinity (Johnstown) .....	225.00
Christ (Westmont) .....	200.00
St. Paul's (Johnstown) .....	131.00
First .....	965.00
Trinity (Somerset) .....	730.00
Rockwood .....	325.00
Boswell .....	75.00
St. James' (Ligonier) .....	25.00
Casebeer .....	300.00
Bedford (Ross) .....	25.00
Men's League (Johnstown) .....	100.00
Grace (Johnstown) .....	25.00
Lilly .....	25.00
Tyrone .....	25.00
Bedford (Huntley) .....	25.00
Clearfield .....	25.00
Greensburg .....	25.00
Total .....	\$5,386.00

James N. Fisher, Treasurer.

was near the site Pastor Stambaugh wanted to show us. Quite a great deal of water was coming from it, and I think we were all impressed. A little farther on we came into a clearing. As we looked around we saw a rather dilapidated hunter's cabin. It had fallen into a state of disrepair and one end had already begun to settle into the ground. The posts on which it was built had rotted off and there was only the length of the logs to support the weight. Very close by was a small spring which would be enough water supply for a small family. There was what looked like a chicken house covered with tarpaper nearby. These were the only things that showed signs of civilization. We walked around in the woods surrounding the cabin admiring the grove of poplars which stood above the road. They were the biggest trees on the tract. Then we followed an old road which brought us to a sizable stream and finally to an open field. Here a deer, startled by our approach, darted across our path and into the timber ahead of us."

Believing that this site offered possibilities for church camping,

the greatest a joint meeting of the Johnstown and Somerset County Lutheran Ministerial Associations was held at Trent State Park on July 8, 1946. Those present voted to purchase the Weimer tract and form a corporation to be known as the Lutheran Camp Association.

Elected as the first officers of the corporation were Dr. Theodore Buch, president, Rev. John B. Foerster, vice-president, Rev. John E. Stambaugh, secretary, and Rev. James N. Fisher, treasurer. Members at large were Rev. Dr. George I. Melhorn, Rev. Theodore Althof and Rev. John D. Ickes. This newly appointed board of directors voted to take an option on the Weimer tract, but money was needed to secure the option.

The ministers at this meeting pooled their available cash which amounted to \$80.00. This amount they took the same afternoon to the real estate agent and after the reluctance of the agent was satisfied, an option was secured. The pastors were given





The original Board of Directors sitting on the front porch of original log cabin near the small spring in Main Camp.

three weeks in which to raise the \$2,500.00 necessary to complete the purchase. The churches of the Allegheny Conference were immediately alerted to the need and the opportunity and within the allotted time the necessary monies were donated by the churches.

It was soon discovered that if sufficient water supply was to be had for the camp, additional land adjoining the original tract must be purchased. The "Big Spring" was not on the Weimer tract, nor were the upper springs along Picking's Run nor much of Picking's Run watershed. It was thought advisable to purchase the adjoining properties and consequently additional acreage was secured to make a total camp site of about 413 acres comprising many fine springs. Also this new acreage controlled much of Picking's Run watershed, an additional right-of-way on the south to the old Lincoln Highway and some fine stands of young timber.

As a means of creating interest in the camp site, Allegheny Conference church members were encouraged to donate acres to the camp at \$25 an acre. Certificates were prepared by the Camp Board which indicated that the donor of \$25 or multiples thereof had purchased acreage for Camp Sequanota. Humorously enough, a few donors misunderstood and thought that they were making a personal purchase of acreage. One donor even inquired when he could build his summer cabin on the acre of ground he had purchased. But this was soon cleared up and donors were even happier when they realized that hundreds of young people and adults would be using the acres of Camp Sequanota for years to come and that in reality all Lutherans of the area owned the more than 400 acres of the camp. To those unable to make \$25 gifts for acres of camp, \$10 share certificates in the camp were prepared and soon many Lutherans possessed these

share certificates as an indication of their part in the beginning of this great endeavor. This was certainly a venture of faith and like always, faith was rewarded.

The next priority was the clearing of the land to prepare it for use as a camp site. During the fall of 1946 and the early part of 1947, volunteer work groups from many of the churches of the conference cut out the brush and cleaned up the area around the old log cabin. A road into the camp site was improved and a bridge was built over Picking's Run.

The old log cabin on the property presented quite a problem. In the spring of 1947, this original building on the grounds was completely renovated. A new foundation was built and the old log cabin was reconstructed on this new foundation. This building provided the total facility for the first camping program which was offered during the summer of 1947. Eight boys attended what was designated as a Pioneer Camp. Rev. John Stambaugh, pastor of the Jennerstown Lutheran Parish, served as a director for this first camp. A great debt is owed to Rev. Stambaugh for the very excellent work he did in the early days of Camp Sequanota. Possessing a great love for young people, a capacity for hard work, and an unyielding faith, he helped the churches of the conference to realize the great opportunity that it had in camping. This Pioneer Camp did a great deal of work in clearing out the area in which the many camp buildings are now located.

During the fall and winter months of 1947 and 1948, the Lutheran Camp Association planned for the erection of necessary buildings to make possible an enlarged camping program in the summer of 1948. This being so soon after the close of World War II, materials were still on a priority basis and were most difficult to obtain. Because of the material shortage the Board of Directors explored other creative options to build a camp from the ground up.

In December of 1947, surplus government barracks were purchased. These were shipped from the state of Mississippi and stored on the camp grounds until weather would permit their erection. From these barracks, buildings were converted into five cabins (1, 4, 5, 6, and 7) measuring 16' by 32' and an additional building with washing and toilet facilities. With the cabins erected, the Camp Board was



Dining Hall Kitchen, 1948.

now faced with the very pressing need for a kitchen and dining hall. Without money but with a great deal of faith, the Board authorized the Berkebile Bros. Company of



Johnstown to build a combined recreation, kitchen, and dining hall at an approximate cost of \$30,000.

On December 31, 1947, forty-eight ministers and laymen met at "Ye Old Inn" in Jennerstown and took action to raise the \$30,000 by an appeal to the churches of the Allegheny Conference. The appeal was not well organized and while some congregations made substantial contributions, only about \$5,000 was realized. The camp now had adequate facilities for its 1948 camping program, but it also possessed a \$25,000 debt. The Board of Directors was convinced that when the Lutherans of the area would see the camp in operation, they would willingly give to erase the indebtedness. The Board of Directors, in addition to those already mentioned, now included Mr. E. M. Shaulis as treasurer, Judge Thomas F. Lansberry, Mr. Marlyn Fetteroff, Mr. William K. Good, Mr. C. A. Shaw, Rev. Walden M. Holl, Rev. John Ickes, and Rev. M. J. Ross. This Board selected Rev. Holl, the pastor of First Lutheran Church at Johnstown, to serve as the first program director of the camp for the 1948 season. Rev. John Stambaugh was appointed to serve as director of buildings and grounds. This dual leadership was necessary because much construction work was carried on while the camp program was in progress.

Amidst the confusion of finishing the kitchen and dining hall, making cinder paths, scrubbing mud from the floors of the new buildings, and teaching many leaders their



Dining Hall at meal time 1949-50. The double doors go into the kitchen.

duties, the first camp for Junior Boys opened on Sunday, July 4, 1948. Forty-six Junior boys were registered for this camp. Despite many unavoidable hardships, and an almost constant downpour of rain, the boys had a wonderful week. Mr. Paul Wilson served as the camp director's assistant for this and subsequent camps during the summer. The first camper to register was Jack Murphy of Johnstown and voted outstanding junior boy camper was Stanley Schilling of Davidsville.

July 11th brought thirty-six girls to Sequanota for the first Junior girls' camp. Pastor Robert Sander served as associate director for this camp. Voted as outstanding camper for the week was Nancy Bock. The Intermediate-Senior boys' camp which began on July 18th was comprised of eighteen boys. This camp was for a two week period. Voted as the outstanding camper was Fred L. Schilling of Davidsville who became a Lutheran pastor. The final camp which began on August 3rd was the Intermediate-Senior girls' group. Two girls from Altoona were voted the outstanding campers - Annabell Hickey and Marcella Ruble. It was during this week that the official camp hymn was composed by the camp director, the final line of which resulted from a contest among the campers to see who could write the most appropriate words. Miss Ruble was the winner of the contest. The first verse of the camp hymn is:

*Camp Sequanota, high in the mountains,  
Blessed by God with many springs,  
Thee will we cherish, Thee will we honor,  
This is God's land, He loves it well.*

The hymn is sung to the tune of "Beautiful Savior" and has been used now by thousands of campers during the years. The hymn points out the meaning of the Indian word, "Sequanota" which is freely interpreted "land of many waters". The name was suggested by Rev. John B. Foerster, who at the time was pastor of the Stoystown Lutheran Parish and most active in the program of Camp Sequanota as well as serving as associate director for a number of seasons at Camp Nawakwa. In 1948, one week of camp cost \$17.00!

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On August 11, 1948, while the camp was still in session, Lutherans of the area were invited to a rally on the camp grounds. A delicious camp dinner was served to this large group and following the dinner, the financial needs of the camp were presented. Mr. William K. Good of Johnstown was elected chairman of the meeting and Rev. Stambaugh was elected secretary. The camp director, Rev. Holl, reported that the Lutherans of the area would now have more than 130 reasons for supporting Camp Sequanota for that many young people had benefited by its program during the first season. Judge Thomas Lansberry explained to those present the plan of



the Board in creating a bond issue to which the local Lutherans might subscribe their support. Mr. Ralph Barnett of Friedens made a motion that this group of Lutherans authorize a mortgage to be placed on the property and the issuance of 4 percent interest bearing bonds to cover this mortgage. Subscriptions were taken and in just a few moments sufficient bonds were subscribed to meet the pressing financial needs of the camp. Again, the Lutherans of the Allegheny Conference area had risen to the challenge and gave evidence that God was leading the people in this project.

The second season at Camp Sequanota was under the direction of Rev. George I. Melhorn who had a number of years training at Camp Nawakwa, and perhaps more than anyone else was responsible for the type of program presented at Sequanota. This second season saw the camp more than double the enrollment over the first year with 322 campers in attendance. All doubts about the need for a camping program in the area were now dispelled as the facilities of the camp were now taxed to capacity.

During this summer the first of the stone cabins was built and was presented as a gift of the Casebeer Lutheran congregation (1949). In subsequent years, additional stone cabins were presented to the camp by Friedens Lutheran Church (1950), Trinity Lutheran Church of Somerset (1951), Moxham Lutheran Church of Johnstown (1952), St. David's Lutheran Church of Davidsville (1953), and First Lutheran, Altoona (1953). Zion Lutheran, Hollidaysburg and Grace Lutheran Church of Stoystown added two additional wooden cabins in 1953.

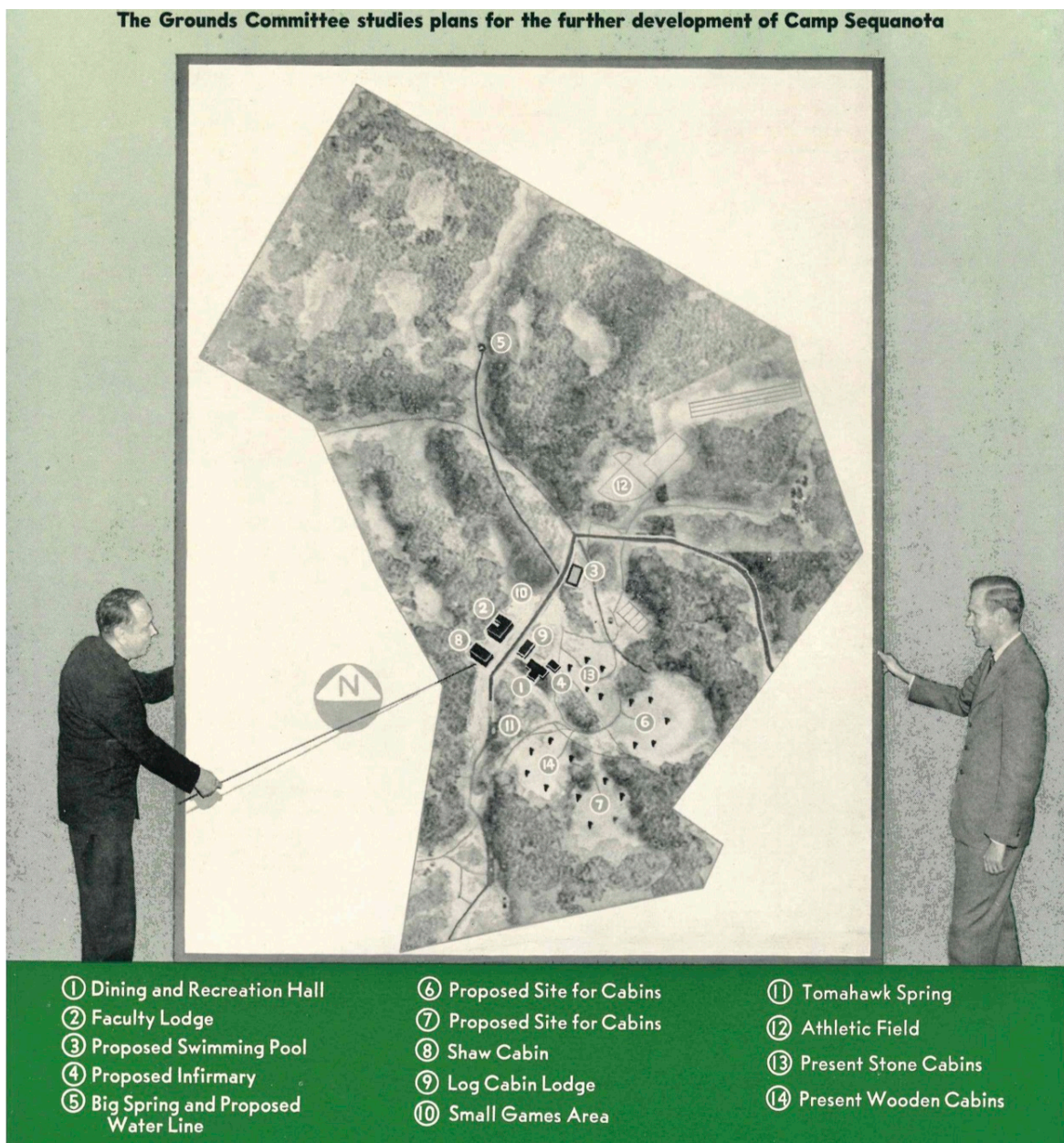
Rev. Holl was asked to direct the camp during the 1950 season when 427 campers attended. The camp now had greatly enlarged facilities and a well trained and experienced staff.

Following the 1950 camping season, the camp Board was faced with two very pressing needs. This first was to secure a camp director who could give more time and attention to the camping program than Pastors Melhorn and Holl could do while serving their large congregations in Johnstown. The second was that of securing a swimming pool for the camp. During the first three seasons, campers had been taken by truck and bus twice weekly to a public swimming pool in Ligonier, some twenty miles away. This was not only a costly procedure for the camp, but also was far from filling the wishes of the campers for the opportunity to swim every day. The Board endeavored to meet both of these needs.



### **The Ministry continues to expand**

Early in 1951, through cooperation with the Jennerstown Lutheran Parish, the Camp Board and the parish issued a dual call to the Rev. Roderic N. Senft to serve as pastor of the parish and director of Camp Sequanota. When Pastor Senft accepted, he



Rev. George Melhorn and Rev. Roderic Senft look over map of improvements to camp.

brought to Camp Sequanota many years of valuable camping experience that he had had at Camp Nawakwa. To meet the second need, a development fund campaign for \$100,000 was authorized by the Board. Dr. Holl was appointed as chairman of this campaign which was conducted in May and June of 1951. This was a great venture for the Lutherans of this area for they had quite recently given almost \$400,000 to a campaign of the Allegheny Lutheran Home and many pastors and church members believed that the amount sought for by the Camp could never be realized. However, when the campaign was completed, \$105,000 had been pledged. The Camp was now able to liquidate its indebtedness of about \$33,000 which had been created through the sale of bonds and necessary improvements to the camp. The camp could now proceed



with construction of a swimming pool, nature building, infirmary building, and the purchase of much needed equipment.

Work on this swimming pool was begun in the spring of 1951. Mr. C.A. Shaw, a member of the Board, supervised the clearing and grading of the area where the pool is now located and he was greatly helped in this work by Mr. Russell Burkett. In September of 1951 The Quaker Sales Company of Johnstown constructed the swimming pool which was one of the finest in the area.

With the completion of the pool many other buildings and improvements were authorized. The beautiful stone classroom built in 1948 and contributed by Mr. and Mrs. C.A. Shaw of Newry was converted into the store and office building in 1956. Thirty



Sequanota's 360,000 gallon pool was completed in fall of 1951.

years later Mr. Luke Speicher constructed a new store across from the small athletic field. The Assembly and Mess Hall building was enlarged to include the maintenance shop, garages, and additional storage space. The Penn Traffic Company donated a building to the camp which then served as Hillside lodge. Two wings were added to this building that served as volunteer dormitories. Through the generosity of Mr. C. A. Shaw, a log cabin, more than 100 years old, was donated to the camp. This building was moved to the camp grounds and reconstructed to form the current "Pastor Ross Nature Cabin. Through the generosity of Mr. Robert K. Shafer of First Lutheran Church, Johnstown, the camp received a legacy gift of \$5,000.00 for the erection of the present craft building. A Mr. Collins of Bedford, PA, donated the log cabin that became the summer home of the Camp Director. It continues to provide staff housing year round. A number of class pavilions were constructed on the camp grounds during the summer of 1957 and two picnic pavilions with fireplaces and picnic tables were built and improved for the use of the friends of Sequanota.

Under Pastor Senft's capable leadership, the camp experienced a steady growth both in program and enrollment. In 1951 there were 531 campers, in 1952 there were 632 campers, in 1953, 647 campers, in 1954, 801 campers, and in 1955, 957 campers. With the constant increase in the number of campers, the extending of the summer program and the inclusion of adult retreats, the Board determined in 1956 that the time had come for the calling of a full-time camp director who would not only supervise the summer camping program, but would also promote the work of the camp

through the churches of the area. This vision was fulfilled when The Rev. George E. Bowersox Jr. was called to the position of Executive Director in 1956.

In the early years of Sequanota, the Boosters' Committee, under the leadership of Mr. Harold Donges and Pastor Robert Sander, Promotion Director, were able to achieve significant increases in camp enrollment. They were able to obtain many gifts from the congregations of the area.

During the 1950's, the guiding hand and spirit was Mr. William K. Good, President of the Camp Board. Mr. Good, a dedicated layman of the First Lutheran Church, Johnstown, an engineer by profession, a lover of the outdoors, and a consecrated Christian, combined these qualifications to give able and untiring leadership to the camp's progress. At each annual election Mr. Good was encouraged by the Board to continue his leadership, until the last annual meeting in November, 1959 the Board of Directors finally acceded to Mr. Good's wishes and permitted him to retire from the presidency after 10 years of very hard work. Attorney Robert G. Rose, of the First Lutheran Church, Johnstown, was elected to succeed Mr. Good as President of the Board.

### A week of camp... what did it look like?

From the beginning, the goal for purchasing the property, clearing and developing the campus was to create camp experiences for the children and youth of the Allegheny Conference. These weeklong adventures were designed to build faith, develop leaders, and challenge kids to grow in independence and responsibility and have fun. The weekly program provided opportunities for instruction in Christian principles, nature, recreational opportunities (volleyball, baseball, swimming), free time, F.O.B. (Flat on Bunk - rest time), store time, singing, Clean Cabin inspection, crafts, a cookout, Night's Doings, and evening campfire fun. These activities were led by faculty members and staff who were parents and young adults willing to give up a week or more of their summer to be at camp. Camp counselors were weekly volunteers who led recreation activities

SCHEDULE INTERMEDIATE BOYS CAMP CAMP SEQUANOTA July 9-July 16, 1956		
MORNING		
7:15	- Reveille	
7:30	- Exercises	
7:45	- Morning Watch	
7:55	- Flag Raising Ceremony	
8:00	- Breakfast	
8:35	- Clean up	
9:00	- FIRST CLASS PERIOD	
	Section A- "FUTURE HOMEMAKERS" - Rev. Charles Aurand	Room #3
	B- "CRAFTS" - Mr. Amalong	Craft Bldg.
	C- "FUTURE HOMEMAKERS" - Mrs. Robert Leety	Room #2
	D- "JESUS WALKS WITH US" Rev. Lee M. Snook	Pavilion
	E- "NATURE" - Mr. Clark	Nature Ldge
	F- "JESUS WALKS WITH US" Rev. Verle Shoemaker	Room #5
9:45	- SECOND CLASS PERIOD	
	Section A- "CRAFTS" - Mr. Amalong	Craft Bldg.
	B- "FUTURE HOMEMAKERS" - Miss Eileen Fleck	Room #2
	C- "JESUS WALKS WITH US" Rev. Franklyn Morris	Room #3
	D- "CRAFTS" - Mr. Amalong	Craft Bldg.
	E- "JESUS WALKS WITH US" Rev. Verle Shoemaker	Pavilion
	F- "NATURE" - Mr. Kenneth Work	Nature Ldge
10:30	- Assembly	
10:45	- THIRD CLASS PERIOD	
	Section A- "JESUS WALKS WITH US" Rev. Lee M. Snook	Room #2
	B- "JESUS WALKS WITH US" Rev. Franklyn Morris	Room #5
	C- "NATURE" - Mr. Kenneth Work	Nature Ldge
	D- "NATURE" - Mr. Clark	Pavilion
	E- "FUTURE HOMEMAKERS" - Mrs. Robert Leety	Room #3
	F- "CRAFTS" - Mr. Amalong	Craft Bldg.
11:30	- Free Time- Store for Crafts and supplies (Swimming)	
12:15	- Wash up	
12:30	- Lunch	
AFTERNOON		
1:00 P. M.	- Store for candy and ice cream	
1:30 P. M.	- Rest Period	
2:00 P. M.	- FOURTH CLASS PERIOD	
	A- "NATURE" - Mr. Clark	Nature Ldge
	B- "NATURE" - Mr. Kenneth Work	Room #2
	C- "CRAFTS" - Mr. Amalong	Craft Bldg.
	D- "FUTURE HOMEMAKERS" - Rev. Aurand	Pavilion
	E- "CRAFTS" - Mr. Amalong	Craft Bldg.
	F- "FUTURE HOMEMAKERS" Miss Eileen Fleck	Room #3
2:45	- ABC - SWIMMING - DEF - ATHLETICS	
3:40	- DEF - SWIMMING - ABC - ATHLETICS	
4:30	- Swimming and Free Time	
5:00	- Wash Up	
5:30	- Supper	
EVENING		
6:00	- Store for Ice Cream and Candy	
6:45	- Choir Practice	
7:10	- Lowering of Flag	
7:15	- Hillside, weather permitting	
8:30	- Night's Doings	
9:30	- Prepare for sleep. Cabin Devotions and 10:00 Taps	

Camp Schedule July 9-16, 1956



and helped manage behavior. The faculty team led all the educational activities and planned the daily schedule. Some of the memorable individuals were: Pastor Mervyn Ross (nature, hikes, travel camps), Ms. Alice Naugle (nature, hikes, travel camps), the Brauns (pool and recreation), the Melhorns (crafts & ceramics), Arthur Beam, Roy Griffith, & John Ohler (caretakers), Romaine Reed (nurse and first female board member) and many, many pastors and volunteers, who helped make Camp Sequanota what it was.

Clearly countless people have left an indelible mark on Sequanota's first 20+ years. There were visionaries, developers, marketers, and fund raisers who volunteered to create Sequanota from nothing. There were also volunteers who served as counselors, faculty, staff, board and committee members. In addition, Lutheran individuals from area congregations served as grounds crew, cooks, cabin counselors, faculty teachers, craft and activity leaders, and camp directors. It took over 200 volunteers to provide camp experiences each summer.

Sequanota's first 33+ years had a very similar camp schedule. The camp's sound system streamed bird calls to waken campers and staff, and church hymns played as the cabins quieted down for the evenings. There were evening vespers at Luther League chapel up on the hillside just west of Main Camp. The end of the week concluded with a closing program at Council Fire down by the stream. Camper and cabin awards were presented as a celebration of the week. Camp programming was evaluated yearly to make the best impact on the children and youth of the region. The camp directors worked diligently to find and train a full team to create the Sequanota experience for thousands of campers.

**Pr. Ross, Ms. Alice, History of the  
land and Sequanota's  
environmental legacy**



Pr. Ross teaching in the Nature Lodge. It must have been raining or they would be on a trail.

The history of Camp Sequanota is the record of the contributions and devoted service of a multitude of people. However, a special word of appreciation needs to be spoken for the devoted labors of Rev. Mervyn Ross, under whose leadership the Nature Program of the camp was developed. The beautiful landscaping evident everywhere has come about through his very careful planning. Over the years, gifts of individuals and churches have been numerous and the archives of the camp has faithfully kept a record

of these. Camp Sequanota is a historic spot. Rev. Ross, who perhaps knew its trails and woodlands better than any other, wrote these words:

"From remote times Indian trails traversed this area and its springs were favorite camping places as the artifacts we find indicate. Its overhanging rocks gave shelter to the primitive people, explorers and hunters as they wandered in this mountain area as they hunted and gathered through this region.

Through this tract the first east and west road across Pennsylvania traversed. Here the road builders camped as they cut and dug their route through the forest. Up over these hills General Forbes' army of 5,800 soldiers and 1,000 wagoners marched on their way to conquer Fort Duquesne. Near here was Fort Dudgeon. Pioneers and traders passed through here as they moved westward. Later, stagecoaches rumbled over this road on their way to western forts and settlements. Here prospectors found iron ore and limestone and venturing businessmen built the Jackson Iron Furnace in 1823, and laborers' dwellings dotted the mountainside. Along this mountain wood cutters felled trees and ranked their wood in domed pits after which skilled men known as "charcoal burners" fired and guarded the burning domes day and night until the product was finished. Teamsters then took over and hauled the charcoal to the iron furnaces.

From time to time many saw mills dotted this area as the large trees were converted into lumber. Later homesteaders cleared areas of stumps and stones and supported large families from their crops. Hunters and fishermen and berry pickers have taken food from the natural resources of this area.

Now, during the summer months, hundreds of youth and adults come here for Christian teaching, spiritual uplift, worship, and recreation.



Ms. Alice debriefing the hike. Her love of nature was contagious.

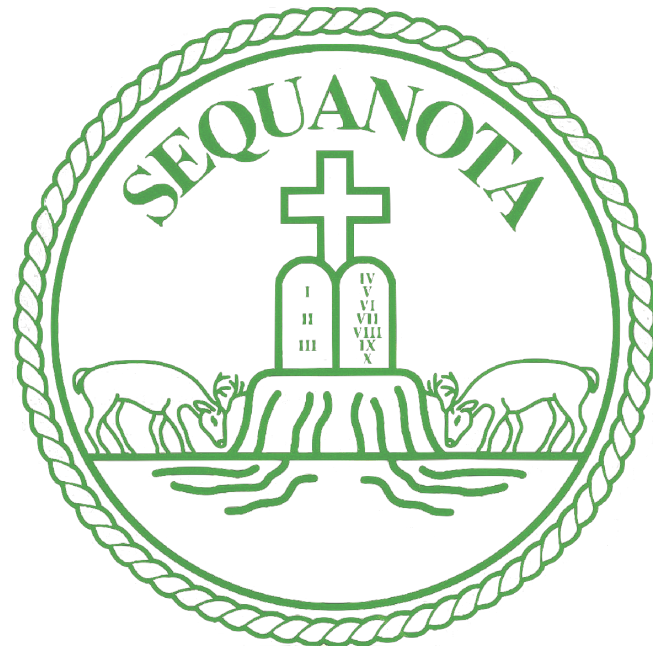
Much has transpired on this mountainside. It has seen primitive occupation, adventurers, the trappings of war, and retreats for the spiritual uplift. It has contributed refuge, fuel, lumber, iron, homesteads. May its present use constitute its greatest contribution to the well being of mankind."

Alice Naugle, "Miss Alice", became well known to thousands of campers for her famous "nature walks" and her zealous guardianship of the Sequanota landscape. Signs calling for the care of the ferns and creation were evidence of the value Sequanota placed on the natural world. Since becoming the land owners, the campers and guests to Sequanota have cared for the pristine streams, rocks, soil, plants, and animals God has provided.

The Camp Seal, or emblem, is the creation of the first Board President, Dr. Theodore Buch. Here are Dr. Buch's words:



“The seal consists of a circular medallion, the central part of which shows a flowing fountain with two deer at the fountain quenching their thirst. This fountain is superimposed with two tablets of the Ten Commandments and the Cross in the center of these tablets. The flowing fountain represents God. ‘As the deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God.’ (Psalm 42, NRSV) All men have a yearning for God. St. Augustine praying to God said, “You have formed us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in You.” God has revealed Godself through the Law and the Gospel. The Law is represented by the Ten Commandments and Gospel by the Cross. God, through the Law and the Gospel sends forth the refreshing and healing streams of salvation, full and free.



The emblem is appropriate because on our camp property we have many springs and streams of running water. Our woods have deer that drink from the flowing streams. The purpose of the camp is to hold high the Cross. Our salvation was attained there. We trust in nothing for our salvation, but in Jesus Christ and in Him Crucified. We teach God’s Commandments as a guide for righteous living. From them we learn what the will of God is. As there oozes forth from our mountain many streams of water, cleansing our dirty hands and faces, quenching our thirst, washing our bodies, sustaining the deer and the wildlife of the forest and giving life to the trees and plants that grow by their side, so we are refreshed at this camp as we are instructed in the Word of God and grow our connection through the sky, tree and flower and as we commune with God in the morning hours and when the evening shadows fall. Here our souls are refreshed from the encounter of the holy through this sacred place on this mountain.”



### **First full time Executive Director and camp continues to grow**

Rev. George E. Bowersox, Jr., Pastor of the Salisbury Lutheran Pastoral Charge and serving as secretary of the camp board, was extended a call to become the first full-time director of Camp Sequanota. He began his duties on February 1, 1956; he retired in March of 1979. During those 23 years over 30,000 campers came to know "Pastor B." Who can ever forget the opening night campfire when he would come out of the shadows. Larger than life, he knelt before a stack of firewood and intoned words that would stay with you until you were a grandparent:

*"Kneel always when you light a fire,  
Kneel reverently and thankful be to God  
For His unfailing charity*

*And on the ascending flame inspire  
A little prayer that shall upbear  
The incense of our thankfulness  
For this sweet gift of warmth and light,  
And here again a sacrifice for your delight.”* (The Sacrament of Fire, John Oxenham)

According to Nancy Coleman, (in a *Johnstown Tribune Democrat* article written in 1986), after he started the fire with a flare, "you craved for a better look. Surely, he was the rightful chief of the "Land of Many Waters". Was it your imagination, or did the rustling wildlife stop to watch and listen? You got goose bumps. You began to get a feel for the place. And it was only Monday."

"Pastor B." became famous (or infamous) for his nightly cabin patrols, his sense of

humor and his MOOSE CALL from the swimming pool "which carried all the way up the hill and the clearing to the mess hall."

Enrollment increased during the Bowersox Era. There were 1168 campers enrolled in 1956; the highest enrollment in camp history occurred in 1966 when 1848 young people and adults were part of that summer at Sequanota.

In the mid 1960s, the Outdoor Ministry of the LCA began sharing camp philosophy and best practices across camps and retreat centers. The Board of Directors welcomed two outside consultants who provided feedback

### *Objectives of Outdoor Ministry*

To help the camper develop a deeper commitment to God.

To help the camper develop a Christian sense of personal identity and worth.

To help the camper practice his Christian vocation in all his interpersonal relationships both at camp and back home.

To help the camper relate in a Christian manner to the world of nature and to gain skills for living in it.

To help the camper relate his Christian growth in a camp to his church, family, and other experiences.

To help the camper make Christian and effective use of his leisure time.

1972 goals for outdoor ministry shared in the camp brochure for the summer.

and suggestions as Sequanota continued to grow. These visits brought about changes like round tables in the Dining Hall (to facilitate small group interaction) and a 1967 remodel of the Main Camp kitchen, which included new serving windows and the dishwashing station. They also provided words of support for the creative new programming happening at Sequanota.

Under Pastor B.'s leadership, Sequanota added new and innovative programming. Outpost (1963), covered wagon camping (1967), backpacking and travel camps all became part of the summer program



Sometimes the Outpost campers - had too much time on their hands (posing for Pr. B.'s photo, 1965).



as well as the development of an archeology camp (1972). With Forbes Road, Tomahawk Spring and streams, and the Jackson Iron Furnace, Sequanota had priceless opportunities to explore and investigate those who came before us on this land. Richard and Noel Stratton were actively involved in establishing these activities. For a number of years, Pastor John Cochran brought campers from inner city Philadelphia to experience a week of camp at Sequanota. This program had many joys and challenges as the campers adjusted to life at a different speed and environment.

Those who served as board presidents during the Bowersox Era, in addition to Mr. Good and Attorney Rose, were Paul Gieg of Hollidaysburg, Attorney Wilbert Beachy of Somerset and the Rev. Arthur Mentzer, Pastor of the Benscreek Lutheran Church.

During a board meeting on January 22, 1983, a motion was passed and a certificate presented to George Bowersox declaring him "Executive Director Emeritus." Pastor B, well-loved and longest-tenured of Camp's directors, died in January of 1989.

### **New Building and Ministry Expansion**



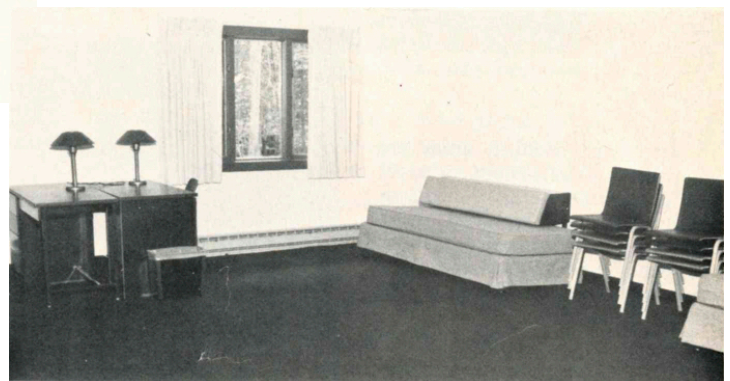
#### **Enrichment Center is Built at Camp Sequanota**

also envisioned such a building on the camp property. A motion was passed forming a joint committee of the Johnstown district pastors and Sequanota Board members to study the feasibility of such a project.

By the spring of 1979, specifications were printed and bids were opened for a new retreat center. The Sequanota Board awarded a contract to B & K Builders of Johnstown for about \$500,000.00. Rev. Vernon Miller, pastor of the Moxham Lutheran Church in Johnstown and a member of the Board, served as chairman of the building committee. Ground was broken for the new building on Sunday, May 23, 1979. It would be a year-round motel-type facility for programs of

It was during Pastor B's tenure that the Board embarked on the most expensive capital improvement in the history of Sequanota: the Enrichment Center.

At a board meeting on September 20, 1968, Pastor David Finney reported that the Johnstown pastors were seeking to purchase or build a retreat center. The camp board had



**This is one of the large sleeping rooms which doubles as a meeting room for small groups.**



**This is the lobby to the new year-round facility which opened earlier this year.**

the congregations of the Synod and the camp itself. A self-contained unit, it would host and feed up to 48 persons and provide a variety of meeting rooms. Special accommodations for handicapped persons were to be included in the Enrichment Center.

Dedication Services for the new Enrichment Center were held Sunday, June 1, 1980. Dr. Howard J. McCarney, President of the Central Pennsylvania Synod of the Lutheran Church in America was the guest speaker. In 1989 the Board of Directors named the Enrichment Center for Pastor Bowersox "who faithfully had

served as Sequanota's first full-time director for 23 years."

### **Trials, Transitions and the BIG Squeeze**

By 1980, Sequanota was facing a "financial squeeze". Camper enrollments were declining not only here but at many church camps. This was due in part to competition from school and sport camps, a changing attitude toward church camping, and severe economic recession in the Greater Johnstown area. The challenge to the Board and the Executive Directors during this time was painfully clear: find a way to not only increase contributions but also camper enrollments in order to pay bills and cover a \$6,000.00 per month mortgage payment on the Bowersox Center. Three executive directors during the 1980's contributed their talents to a plan of renewal in both program and finances. In October of 1979, the Board called Pastor Arthur Mentzer, who had served previously as Board President. It was during these years that Sequanota began a new partnership with Allegheny Lutheran Social Ministries to host and lead a week of camp for mentally challenged adults. Pr. Mentzer resigned in the fall of 1981 and returned to parish ministry in Maryland.



**Camp Director Rev. Arthur Mentzer's office**

Richard Peterson was installed as the new Executive Director during the annual Open House on June 13, 1982. He had been the director at Camp Mishawaka in Grand Rapids, Minnesota. During his leadership the camp program made a significant shift in how





Dick, Sharon & Anne Peterson

program was delivered. Campers were given individual choice over what activities they did each day. Campers filled out a form at the beginning of their week selecting

what camp activities they wanted to participate in daily. Then the camp's leadership team would spend the first night placing campers into six activity periods by their selected choices. While campers still participated in nature, crafts, pool time, games, hikes and activities, each built their own schedules and the camp team assigned them into small groups that would go to the activity area selected by the camper. Mr. Peterson resigned his position in late 1985 to become Executive Director of Outdoor Ministries in the Indiana-Kentucky Synod.



Matt, Peggy, & Tom Grote



## SEQUANOTA

Camp Sequanota is located on the eastern slope of the Laurel Mountains, two miles west of Jennerstown, off Route 30. Cabin camping, tenting, and wilderness camps are conducted on the 400-acre site.

In its 35th year of ministry to youth and adults, Sequanota presents a Lutheran witness in all aspects of its program. It provides a growing experience in a Christian atmosphere through a variety of weekly-camping experiences.

**Adults Age 55 and up** (July 25-31) Enrichment Center — intensive Bible study, swimming, ceramics, walking in the woods and planned evening events in a very comfortable setting, with opportunities for cross-generational sharing. Cost: \$80.

**Archaeology** (July 25-31) Outpost — excavation of the 19th century Witt homestead, cataloging, and basic laboratory work. Field trips and films provide dimensions of biblical, prehistoric, and historic archaeology. Offered in cooperation with the Somerset County Archaeology Society. For junior high, senior high, and adult campers. Leader: Noel Stratton. Cost: \$85.

**Backpacking: Age 12 and up** (July 11-17) Out-of-Camp — backpacking along 47 miles of the Laurel Highland Trail. Worship, discussions, and devotions; opportunities for learning outdoor skills and building Christian relationship. Cost: \$90.

**Canoeing: Age 12 and up** (July 25-31) Out-of-Camp — basic instruction in canoeing at the Youghiogheny Dam. Campers prepare their own meals and sleep in tents. Emphasis on safety. Proficiency in swimming required. A minimum of 10 participants. Registrations requested 20 days prior to the camp. Cost: \$90.

**Church Music Camp** (July 11-17) Adults, Youth and Families — for all levels of musical proficiency. Orff instruments featured; biblical and liturgical studies in the adult program; handbells. Leaders: Dr. Robert Lau, Beverly Antis and the Rev. Kenneth Diable. Adults are housed in the Enrichment Center, and children and families in cabins. Cost: \$95 for adults; \$85 for children; \$220 for families.

**Confirmation Camp** (June 20-26) Main Camp — a week-long program to augment confirmation ministry in the local congregation. Pastors from several congregations teach basic Lutheran doctrine individually or in teams. The program is supplemented with recreational events using the camp staff and facilities. Programs are tailored to individual needs. Interested persons should contact Dr. Russell Norris, Union and Allegheny Streets, Hollidaysburg, 16648, or write directly to Camp Sequanota. Cost: \$90.

**Elementary** (June 27-July 3; August 1-7)

**Junior High** (July 4-10; August 8-14) Main Camp

Opportunities for campcraft, team athletics, worship, crafts, nature lore, hiking, swimming, Bible study and interpersonal relationships are provided to promote individual spiritual growth. Special events are designed for total camp involvement. Volunteer resource people, staff and cabin counselors provide leadership, teach and offer individual assistance. Cost: \$80.

**Family Camp** (July 25-31; August 15-20) Main Camp — swimming, nature trails, family worship, arts and crafts, cookouts, volleyball, softball, special events for children, out-of-camp excursions. Family representatives will work directly with the program director to plan their daily schedule. Cost: \$220 for a family of four or less; \$55 for each additional person.

**LEADS** (August 1-7) — a leadership training event for senior high youth, held in cooperation with the Commission on Youth Ministry. An intensive program of study, sharing sessions, and recreation. Limited to 40 participants. Cost: \$85.

**Outdoor Living Camp: Elementary** (July 11-17); **Junior High** (July 18-24) Outpost — Campers will receive instruction in outdoor cooking, fire building, plant and wildlife identification, environmental awareness, and other phases of the outdoor experience, together with opportunities for practicing Christian lifestyles and building interpersonal relationships. Cost: \$80.

**Rock Climbing Camp: Ages 12 and up** (June 20-26) Main Camp — skilled personnel assist campers to learn the fundamentals of rock climbing and rappelling and to help them relate these experiences to their relationship with God. Campers sleep and eat in the main camp. A minimum of 10 participants is necessary. Registrations requested 20 days prior to the camp. Cost: \$90.

**Rocketry — Basic** (June 27 - July 3) Main Camp — primarily for students completing third, fourth and fifth grades. Campers will assemble and fire rocket kits under the skilled leadership of Henry Strelein. Safety and responsibility are stressed along with Bible study, recreation, swimming and sports. Cost: \$90.

**Rocketry (Advanced)** (July 4-10) Main Camp — primarily for students completing fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth grades. Participation in a basic space age camp or a public school space age program is a prerequisite. Under the leadership of Henry Strelein, participants will design, assemble and fire their own rockets. A full program is included. Cost: \$90.



SEQUANOTA

## Summer Brochure 1982

Dr. Margaret Grote was hired in 1986 as Executive Director. She had been employed at Penn State and had served as Program Director at Pine Springs Camp near Sequanota. In 1988, the Lutheran Church in America merged with two other Lutheran Church bodies to form the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. This merger meant that Sequanota expanded its reach to one additional counties as the Allegheny Conference became the Allegheny Synod (Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Centre, Clearfield, Huntingdon, and Somerset Counties). During this time, the Board of Directors set out to raise funds to help pay down the debt of the Bowersox Center.

Though funds were raised the debt would remain for twenty years.

Under Dr. Grote's leadership Sequanota returned to providing many specialty camp programs such as archery, backpacking, and horseback riding, while still offering traditional cabin camping. Dr. Grote and her husband, Thomas Grote, who served as the summer program director, worked to return Sequanota's programming to its legacy of small group camping. This meant cabin groups completed their daily camp activities together. Cabin groups were assigned to activity areas like swimming, crafts, nature hikes, Bible study, sports, and recreation activities. During an extended illness, many of Dr. Grote's duties were assumed by Pastor Charles Lady, Board President, and Tom Grote. She died in December of 1992 after waging a heroic battle against cancer. Chelle Jelleff served as an interim Director for the summer of 1993.



'Chelle Jelleff leading music during campfire.

Others played a major role in getting Sequanota through this financial crisis period. William Kahler, a chemistry teacher at Johnstown High School who had been director of camping at a large Scout camp in Maryland, served as interim Executive Director on two occasions during the 1980's. He also served as Program Director for Pastor Mentzer, Mr. Peterson, and Dr. Grote.

Members of the Board had to assume new roles as volunteers. William G. Good, Daniel Eash, Pastor Phillip Lambdin, and Pastor Charles Lady served as Board Presidents. They spent extended hours along with many others in promoting the Camp and raising money for the Bowersox Center through the GO campaign.

Certainly the work of the Lutheran Men's' League during the 1980's and the 1990's left an indelible mark on Camp's facilities. They were a dedicated group of volunteers who donated thousands of hours of time and talents to refurbish the Sequanota property. Their leaders included Dean Naugle, John Grexa, George Streilein, Walter Shank and James Ferg. The Commission on Camping of the Central Pennsylvania Synod was particularly supportive of Sequanota at this time. It was chaired by Robert Lewis of Johnstown, a former Sequanota board member. In 1985 the Board entered into an agreement with Lutheran Social Services-Allegheny Region to purchase management services. Dr. Daun McKee was the CEO of LSS.

By the end of the 1980's, through the efforts of these individuals and the support of the Synod and our congregations, enrollment gradually increased, debt was reduced on the Bowersox Center mortgage, and the camping program went through a period of renewal.





Rev. Wayne Williams & Ellie Lady at Heritage Festival, 1993.

## **New directions, renovations, and new programs**

There was still much to do, however, and that responsibility was left to a new Executive Director, Pastor F. Wayne Williams, who began his work at Sequanota on September 15, 1993. He came here from Lutheridge/Lutherock Ministries in North Carolina, which is the largest Lutheran camping center in the country.

In the fall of 1994, Lee Lindeman (1994-1998) was called to be Sequanota's first full-time Program Director. He previously had been director at Pathways'

Camp Minne-wa-kan in Minnesota. Under Lee's leadership, Sequanota built its first challenge course elements. This course was designed to teach cabin groups to work together to overcome a problem/challenge. The course led campers to improve their communication skills, leadership, and teamwork. Pastor Jay Thorsen, Larry Mazer, and Attorney James Beener served as Board Presidents during this period. The Board of Directors along with Pastor Williams and Mr. Lindeman formed an effective team to lead Sequanota in many new programs and activities, which became available to camp participants on a year-round basis.

In addition to traditional summer camping, Sequanota offered programs during the fall, winter and spring for engaged couples, married couples, singles, senior citizens, and golfers as well as a ski retreat, a Family Advent Retreat and the Mini School of Lay Theology. All of these programs were held in the Bowersox Center and usually lasted 2-3 days. Sequanota redeveloped a high adventure program that included rock climbing, backpacking, and white water rafting. Also, two annual fund raising activities, the Heritage Festival and the Oakhurst Benefit Dinner reached new levels of attendance and financial support under Pastor Williams' leadership.

Significant improvements to the physical property were part of the Williams Era at Sequanota. New septic tanks were installed, and the assembly/dining hall was



Director's home completed in 1998.

winterized. A selective cutting of timber produced additional revenue for capital improvements. Two cabins in main camp were renovated. With the Lutheran Men supplying many hours of donated labor, new roofs were placed on 20 buildings throughout the camp property. Mr. Elvin Overdorff and the Quaker Sales Company completed the paving of the main camp road without cost to the camp. Finally, the Board authorized the drawing of plans and financing of a home to be built on camp property

to house a director and family. This project was completed in 1998.

Pastor Williams and the Sequanota Board continued to broaden the camp's ministry beyond Lutheran Christians in the region. In 2000, Sequanota began a long partnership with the Roman Catholic Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown. This partnership has continued for over 20 years with the two denominations working together to provide a Catholic Christian camp experience for hundreds of children and youth annually. The Outpost campers enjoyed an upgrade from canvas tents to wooden Adirondacks (lean-tos). Another major accomplishment during the 1990s was the refinancing of Sequanota's debt from a bank to nine local congregations. This positioned Sequanota to make payments without endangering the camp financially. Pastor Wayne Williams and his wife, Cecilia, long time office manager, retired from Sequanota in January of 2003.

The Board of Directors called the Rev. Jack Timm as the Interim Executive Director in February 2003. Pastor Jack's experience in managing a retreat center in New England helped Sequanota navigate this time of transition. Significant improvements to the Bowersox Center included fresh paint, new linens, and new bedroom furniture to replace the couch/beds, which were original to the building. There were also improvements to the pool chlorination system from the gas system used since the 1960s. Pastor Timm brought stability during what could have been a difficult transition through the summer of 2004.



Rev. Jack Timm at Synod Assembly promoting camp.

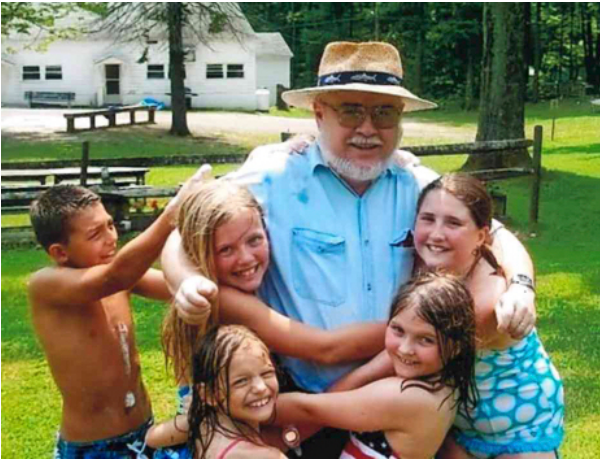


Bob Williams sharing photos from another week of camp.

In the fall of 2004, the Board hired Robert Williams to be the next Executive Director. Bob's leadership brought program upgrades including the iceberg in the swimming pool, the climbing tower and zipline, and three additional team building elements to the challenge course. Unfortunately, the covered wagon village, which had fallen out of popularity and into disrepair, was removed. Bob Belsterling and Dr. Michael Satryan served as Board Presidents through these transitions. Bob Williams left Sequanota to manage city and county recreation parks in the fall of 2006.

Sequanota was struggling under the remainder of the debt from the Bowersox Center and hundreds of thousands of dollars from operational overruns. The Rev. George Mason offered to serve as a volunteer interim Executive Director at Sequanota in the fall of 2006. Rev. Mason had served on the camp board several times over the years





Rev. George Mason sharing a laugh with campers.

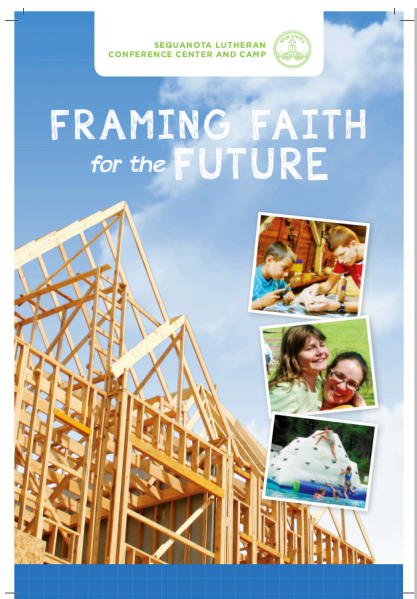
and his stewardship and passion for outdoor ministries took on a new role at Sequanota. After two years, the Board felt Rev. Mason was a strong fit to continue-leading Sequanota as the Executive Director. Rev. Mason focused on debt reduction and generously donated half his time during the next four years while managing and running camp. His deep love for Sequanota, its ministry, and the people, inspired donors, families, and congregations as the summer camp program and Sequanota's financial health improved.

Rev. Mason oversaw the Main Camp Dining Hall restroom addition that was completed in 2008. Adam and Eve are still in service, however the new facilities are significantly more accessible for campers of all abilities and ages. During this time, the Camp succeeded in paying off all debts and burning the Bowersox Center mortgage. It took the commitment of many executive directors and board teams to restore financial independence. In the summer of 2009, more than 29 years after building the retreat center, Sequanota was finally debt free. The facility has continued to be a valuable asset for adult and family retreats.

The camp's facilities were in need of renovation and upgrades. Over sixty years of usage had taken its toll on the pool, Dining Hall kitchen, cabins, and Bowersox Center. Rev. Mason oversaw upgrades to the roof, insulation, and hot water system in the Bowersox Center and worked with year round Program Director Ang Illar to increase resident summer camp attendance, re-institute Day Camps at synod congregations, offer college Spring Break Service weeks, and increase staff salaries.

The Board of Directors launched a strategic plan to guide their work over these years. They also began the process of studying and developing a Capital Campaign to address much needed property improvements in the near future. Dr. Michael Satryan and Rev. Nathan Pile served as Board Presidents during these years. In September 2012, Rev. George Mason retired as the Executive Director of Sequanota. The board asked Rev. Frank Harpster, a local minister from Meyersdale, to serve as the interim Executive Director, and Ken Lyle served as President. Rev. Harpster and President Lyle provided Sequanota's staff support during this transition until a new director was found.

In February 2013, the Rev. Nathan Pile became the ninth full time Executive Director in Sequanota's history. Pr. Nathan grew up at Sequanota as a camper and



summer staff member. He served two short tenures as Sequanota's year round Program Director in late 1998-2000, and again in 2003 before heading to seminary. Shortly after his arrival as the Executive, the Board of Directors launched the \$1.2 million Capital



Pr. Nathan with members of the 2017 summer staff.

Campaign, "Framing Faith for the Future". This campaign has been the largest in the camp's history and will be brought to a close in 2022. The campaign has raised over \$1 million and completed all but two of the planned projects thus far.

In 2013-2014 the Board of Directors and Property Committee spent a considerable amount of time developing a Master Site Plan. This plan is to be updated every 10 years and lays out all major building projects for the next 25 years on the Sequanota campus.

In 2018 the Board, along with with

camper, family, congregation, and staff input, developed a new Strategic Plan of over 20 phased goals. The Board annually has selected three goals and has worked to bring the goals to completion. These have included: increasing camper registrations by 10% in one year, increasing retreat guest attendance by 10% in one year, and developing a new Mission, Vision, and Outcome statements to guide the Board of Directors and staff in their work. Completing the Capital Campaign is another of these strategic goals. Ken Lyle, Rev. Carol Custead, Dave Shoemaker and Rev. Will Osman have served as Board Presidents.

In the last decade, in addition to many Capital Campaign projects, volunteers and staff have managed cabin renovations, including the Director's Cabin, Hillside A, B and C (formerly Men's and Women's Faculty and Boys' Staff), Cabins 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, and new roofs on Cabin 8 and the Nature Lodge; the complete remodeling of the swimming pool; significant renovations to the wastewater plant and the Bowersox Center; and the installation of new commercial kitchen and laundry equipment in both the Dining Hall and the Bowersox Center. The campaign also met the expense of bringing high speed internet to all of camp's major buildings. The original Classroom Building was





removed to make way for a new RV/tent campsite to be built in the future.

As society rapidly changes through technological advancement and shifting culture, Sequanota will once again adapt its ministry to meet the needs of God's people.



The Lutheran church and its ministries find themselves changing and adapting as well. The congregations and people of the Allegheny Synod have always and continue to enthusiastically support this faith formation ministry. As congregational attendance continues to decline, Sequanota's Board of Directors and staff seek new ways to engage God's people. While the majority of Americans still profess to

believe in God, effective outreach to families cannot remain the same as it has in the past. Social media, personal invitations, scholarships, and other exposure to Sequanota programming have become important ways of reaching new campers and guests. Though Sequanota's legacy was built on summer camping for kids and families, current trends show that the year round ministry of retreat hosting is reaching a whole new population, fulfilling the Camp's mission in a different way. These changes mean adaptation and new strategies are necessary to meet the challenges of doing ministry at Sequanota. The Board of Directors continues to explore and plan for the future of vital and vibrant outdoor ministry that connects Christ, creation and community.

Sequanota, the Land of Many Waters, expresses the faith of the Lutheran people of the Allegheny highlands through a ministry which has already born rich fruit in the lives of many individuals and congregations. The dream that began when a few faithful pastors pooled their resources of \$80.00 has grown to a property with facilities and equipment valued at more than \$2.2 million. Yet the true value of camp is the impact this community makes on the thousands of young people and adults who annually participate in programs designed to meet the challenges we all face as we approach the year 2030.

Seventy five years of Sequanota's history have given us four hundred and thirteen acres of beautiful land, a magnificent swimming pool, a retreat center, a plethora of camp buildings, and many other physical resources. But that which cannot be measured in time or material is Sequanota's greatest asset - the countless persons representing this ministry's leadership and the beloved children of God who are numbered as campers and guests. May they continue to tell and to be the Sequanota story. God bless Sequanota; may this place and this ministry forever be a witness to what the united faith

of a dedicated people can accomplish together in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The original history was authored by Rev. Dr. Walden Holl. William G. Good made revisions in 1997 for the 50th Anniversary. Rev. Nathan Pile made revisions and updates in 2022 for the 75th Anniversary Celebration. Special thanks to editors Barb Pile, the Rev. Gregory Pile and the Rev. Traci Marriott.