

Ohio FFA Camp Muskingum History

“Four Men and a Camp”

- 6/3/33 The Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District (MWCD) was created, in accordance with Ohio law to carry out a comprehensive flood control and water conservation project in the Muskingum River Watershed and to secure the necessary financial cooperation between and among individual property owners and the local, state and federal government. **Bryce Browning** was the founder and first Secretary. The watershed encompassed 18 counties in eastern OH. The plan included the construction of 10 “wet” lakes and 4 “dry” dams which would include 16,000A of water and 35,000A of adjoining land. The US Army Corp of Engineers assisted as per their specific mission--Planning, designing, building, and operating locks and dams. MWCD, operating as an Ohio political subdivision, provided the 10% match for federal grants received.
- 1934-35 National FFA Program of Work encouraged States to provide Camps.
Early States were FL, GA, MI, NC, TN, & KY.
- 1935 OH FFA State Officers visited Camp Miniwanca in MI established by the William H Danforth Foundation.
- 1930-46 **Bryan Sandles** invested a lifetime working with youth. In the early years of the FFA, as Director of the Ohio State Junior Fair, he developed a very high regard for the FFA organization and for FFA members and proved to be one of its very best salesman. He shared his support with his friends **Trent Sickles**, Assistant to the President, F. and R. Lazarus and Co., Thomas Hayward, President of the Ohio (Ford) Tractor Co. and officials of the Standard Oil Company (Ohio).
- 1935 US National Youth Administration(NYA) was established to get young men and women (16-25 yrs of age) off the streets and into job training programs. The plan was to establish camp centers to give training in all trades including Agriculture and Conservation.
- Mr. Browning** and **Mr. Sickles** learned of this program from an article in the Columbus Dispatch newspaper and MWCD offered NYA a site on Leesville Lake, free of charge, w/provision in the 8 year lease that if and when NYA was discontinued that the buildings would become the property of MWCD for youth education in Conservation.
- 1935-36 First serious discussion about a State Camp was held by State President Earl Blaney.
- 1939 League of Ohio Sportsman, under the leadership of **Trent Sickles**, sponsored an FFA Chapter Award in Game Mgt.
- 1939 MWCD reserved the inside area of Leesville Lake for youth camps.
- 1939 The operation of the lakes and dams, along with the property immediately surrounding the dam sites, was transferred to the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, Huntington District, after the approval of the Flood Control Act of 1939 by Congress. The MWCD continues to be responsible for the management of much of the reservoir areas behind the dams, serving as a partner to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for flood reduction. The reservoirs also serve as sources of public water supply and the MWCD manages about 54,000 acres (220 km²) of water and property, most of which is open for public access. In

addition to operating a number of recreation facilities, the MWCD cooperates with the Ohio Division of Wildlife for fishing and hunting management.

1940 Rausenberger Conservation Memorial Fund, through the influence of **Trent Sickles**, established FFA Camp Scholarships for students to learn more about conservation.

1941 State Officers, under the leadership of Pres. Eugene Junkin established a resolution to develop an Ohio FFA Camp. (Eugene Junkin later lost his life in a bombing mission during World War II.) The building of the NYA Camp on Leesville Lake stimulated action among FFA State Officers and Advisors.

1941 Camp Committee established including:

Advisors:

Ralph Burdick -Fremont/Sandusky
Ralph Grimshaw-Whiteoak Rural/Highland
Dale Friday-Belleville&ButlerVillage/Richland
C T Newsom-Trey Twp/Athens
Marion Wallace-Germantown/Montgomery
D L Martin-Forest-Jackson/Union

FFA Officers

Eugene Junkin Jr, President
Carl Fought, Past President
Charles Might, Vice President
Merle Voris, Exec Comm-Johnstown
George Hansel, Exec Comm

State Office

Ralph A Howard, Advisor

Warren G Weiler, Executive Secy/Treas

2/28/41 First Meeting

7/18/41 Ohio Vo-Ag Teachers Association Exec Comm Mtg-Deshler-Wallick Hotel, S High St, Columbus. Ralph Burdick, President presiding.

Bryce Browning, MWCD explained NYA, 8 year lease w/buildings remaining if program was discontinued.

Trent Sickles thought NYA could build the FFA Camp if building material and supplies were provided. FFA would have to pay all taxes.

All teachers to be surveyed to determine if funding was possible.

Proposal was:

Chapters with membership <25	\$5.00
Chapters with membership between 25-35	7.00
Chapters with membership >35	10.00
All Teachers, Teacher Trainers & Supervisors	1.00

10/4/41 Camp Executive Committee meets at NYA to view the proposed camp site(SW of NYA). All FFA Advisors were invited to attend and 90 attended, including **Howard**, **Sandles**, **Sickles** and **Browning**. They observed the NYA operation, learned about the MWCD and they learned that Leesville Lake would be at full pool in 1942.

It was agreed that:

The NYA road could be extended to the FFA Camp by NYA labor.

The REA line could be extended to furnish electricity.

Mr. Sandles suggested that FFA chapters could make a drive for dead chestnuts logs and ask State and County trucks to haul them to Camp.

Captain Larrison, Director of NYA Center offered to saw the logs and house the FFA boys while they build the buildings.

The FFA Camp could utilize the existing water and sewer systems, granting that cost would be shared.

Chairman Burdick reported that the survey indicated 100% support of teachers and chapters.

Secretary, Warren G. Weiler, was authorized to write letters:

To MWCD Directors requesting the site of land, adjacent to the NYA Camp, for the construction of the Ohio FFA Camp.

To ask FFA Chapters to contribute money for the Camp at the following annual rates, for three years.

Chapters with membership <25	\$5.00
Chapters with membership between 25-35	7.00
Chapters with membership >35	10.00
All Teachers	1.00
Teacher Trainers & Supervisors	2.00

11/41 Ohio Future Farmer Newsletter reported that 15 states had FFA Camps paid for by chapters and individual subscriptions and that the Camp Committee recommended that a minimum of \$4,000 would be necessary before construction could begin.

12/16/41 Articles of Incorporation were accepted for Ohio FFA Camps, Inc as a, not for profit, corporation. Camps was used in the name so other Camps in the state could be considered.

4/42 Total contributions received: 12/'41-\$487.50, 1/'42-\$804.00, 2/'42-\$1,077.00, 3/'42- \$1,500.50, 4/'42-\$1,820.00

PRESIDENTIAL EXECUTIVE ORDER-All new buildings, for non essential purposes was to stop so resources could be directed to the war effort. (A blessing in disguise) Sickles urged FFA to get some experience in camping ASAP. MWCD offered a set of farm buildings down the lake for that purpose.

6/42 National FFA Camp established in Alexandria, VA for use by local chapters while touring in Washington, DC. Site located near the National FFA Supply Center, near Mt Vernon.

6/5/42 Camp Executive Committee met and approved:

-A Code of Regulations for the Ohio FFA Camps, Inc

-A plan whereby camp funds would be used for food, supplies for remodeling and advisors would voluntarily provide labor, at \$.03/mile for transport to Camp.

6/10/42 Actual remodeling of the farm buildings to be used for camp started when the first of 6 groups of advisors arrived for work. The plan was for a group to come each week, work Tuesday-Thursday, daylight to dark with 4 meals provided each day. The plan was that the kitchen and Dining hall would be in the basement of the barn, assembly and recreation on the first floor and sleeping quarters on the 2nd floor. A smaller barn was remodeled for sleeping and a 2nd floor added. The house provided space for an office and quarters for the staff. A latrine was built and smaller buildings removed that were not needed.

The first meals were prepared over an open fire. During the first groups one meal per day was served at the NYA Center.

The advisors showed marked abilities in many fields, worked hard, made new friends and were enthusiastic about the development of a worthwhile project. A dip in the lake was a treat in the evening.

The Carroll County Commissioner and County Engineer, Donald R. Blythe, were very supportive by grading and improving the road to our camp. The Ohio Department of Conservation drilled our water well and employee, Bill Windsor, went above and beyond and laid brick and tile, hauled drain tile, found food sources, brought a large ice refrigerator and a portable electric light plant to camp. **Trent Sickles** provided a truck load of equipment, including 125 folding chairs, show cases, kitchen equipment, tables, etc. The Isaac Walton League, a national organization, interested in the preservation of the outdoors, sent a check for \$100.

The Ohio Conservation Department was very supportive with the first FFA camp program, providing staff from Game Management, Soil, Water, and Forestry Divisions.

THE FIRST CAMP PROGRAM

8/2/42 The camp opened Sunday August 2, 1942 and ended on Saturday, August 8 with 2 similar periods completing on August 22. The first group to arrive and register for camp was the Dresden Future Farmers, Mr. R. G. McMurray, advisor. Reo Gurgoon, a teacher from North High School, Columbus was the first Camp Manager. His experience with Hi-Y and Boy Scout Camps and his training and experience as a medical officer in World War I were of special value in organizing and conducting the Camp Program. He was excellent in conducting group discussions, being a business manager and program director. Campers paid \$5.00 for the five day camp and after 3 sessions had a \$4.63 balance. A part of this was due to our Chef, Mrs. Mary Jay, manager of the Worthington School cafeteria. Mrs. Jay served as camp chef for 23 years, when she chose to retire.

3/27/43 The FFA Camp Board meets and makes the following decisions.

1. Let FFA members decide, through a survey, if camp would open in 1943.
2. Urge chapters to continue contributions
3. Loan camp buildings to MWCD during tree planting season.

3/27/43 Second Annual Meeting of Ohio FFA Camps, Inc, Chapel, Ohio State University
Vice President Charles Might presiding.

Report of 1942 Camp

225 FFA Members, 28 Advisors attended 3 sessions

64% of chapters contributed \$3000 to the Camp Fund

Campers were proud to have worked 2 hours improving the camp and felt that it was a better place when they left.

Discussed decisions of the FFA Camp Board

The following were elected to the Camp Board:

Advisor(s)	Future Farmers
C T Newsom- Trey Twp/Athens	Otto Shaw
Paul F Pulse-Hillsboro/Highland	Carl Bowman
C W Snyder-Shreve/Wayne	Wendell Ryder

W H Teegarden-Spencerville/Allen Richard Dawson

6/9/43 The FFA Camp Board meets and makes the following decisions.

Increase camp fee for six day camp from \$5.00 to \$6.50

Hold 1 camp session if registration is below 100 campers

Hold 2 camp sessions if registration exceeded 150 campers

THE SECOND FFA CAMP 1943

8/43 The camp facilities had been improved by the MWCD tree planters.

A water pressure system was installed with a hot water heater making a shower possible. The portable electric light plant, which had worked at its own convenience, ran perfectly.

Two camp sessions were planned during the weeks of August 16 and 23 with 225 attending from 47 chapters. Conservation continued to be the central theme of the camp program. The study of soils, farm woodlots, water resources, game management and nature trails.

Vocational activities included first-aid, plant and animal production, swimming, boating, use of guns, fishing tackle and photography. The campers were divided into 13 different groups with campers from a chapter assigned to different groups. A group leader was elected by the group.

6/30/43 CONGRESS failed to appropriate funds for the continuation of NYA beyond June 30, 1943. Therefore, because of the unusual provision included in the MWCD lease, by **Trent Sickles**, the new buildings became the property of MWCD.

7/2/43 **Bryce Browning** called the state office to ask when the FFA wanted to take over the camp property. The disposition of equipment was not included in the lease. The cost of equipment for a camp to house 400 people would be considerable and would be a real task for the FFA. Again, **Trent Sickles** found a way, He and **Ralph Howard** went to the Cincinnati Office of the US Treasury Department, the office responsible for the disposition of surplus government property, and asked the officials to make the equipment available to the FFA for educational purposes. The immediate reaction was negative, officials believing this was impossible. After considerable pressure from Mr. Sickles except for some items difficult to get and needed for the war effort, the Treasury officials consented to loan the equipment to the State Department of Education, Vocational Agriculture Service. The only items retained by the Army were the dishes and silverware, hospital equipment, and some kitchen equipment. The loan was revoked after a comparatively brief period of time.

The exact value of the camp land, buildings and equipment that have been made available to the FFA has never been determined. However it was well over \$1,000,000 and the plan to build and open our own camp(SW of here) was discontinued. It is extremely doubtful if the FFA could have ever financed facilities as adequate as those now being used at Camp Muskingum. FFA members in Ohio should be forever grateful for the continuing lease which assures the future lease of the camp at a nominal rate.

However, after a survey of the camp facilities by the FFA Camp Board, it was decided that not all buildings were needed. They were built to house a minimum of 400 and board members felt that a maximum of 300 would be optimum for the type of FFA Camp program planned and that not all of the buildings would be needed. Furthermore, other youth groups were planning to build camps in the vicinity and they needed assistance; therefore, 3 dormitories, 1 administration building and several shop buildings were shared with Camp Aldersgate (above Camp Muskingum), Camp Firebird (old FFA camp site) and 4H Camp Piedmont on Piedmont Lake in Belmont County.