

"Here We Sit Like Birds in the Wilderness Waiting for Our
Dessert": The Girl Scout Program and Ordering Space in
Camp Sacajawea's Dining Hall/Main House *Susan Charles
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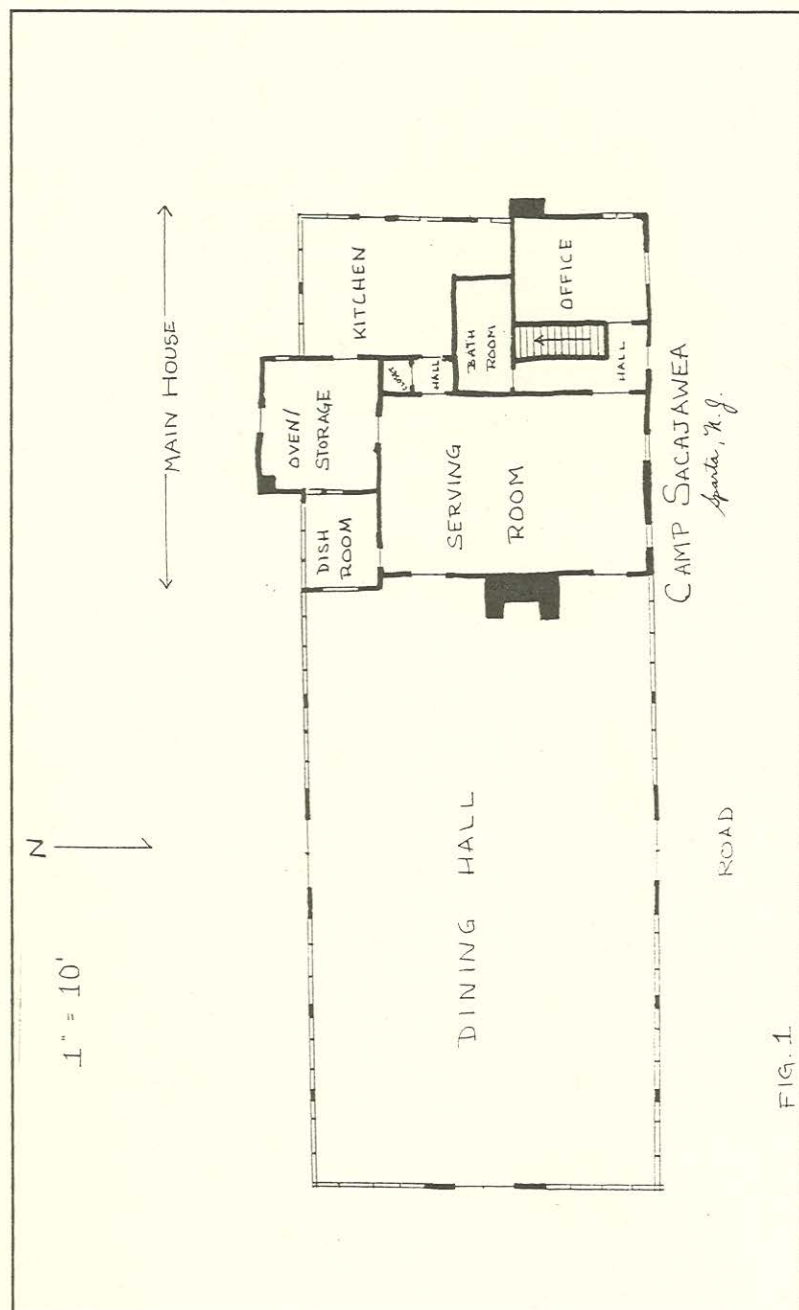
It is early in the evening sometime in July, sometime in the 1970s, in the Dining Hall at Camp Sacajawea, a Girl Scout camp in Sparta, New Jersey. Dinner has been served and dessert will come out soon. Some girls are clearing tables. In the serving room, a meeting ground between kitchen and dining hall, the kitchen staff hands dessert trays to the girls on serving duty; campers are not allowed in the kitchen, and kitchen staff have little need to go into the dining hall (see Fig. 1). The rest of the girls—at least one hundred and fifty—sit at the tables with their counselors and the other camp staff.

A din rises from units at the southeast end of the hall. The Scouts pound both hands in 4/4 time on the edge of the table; first the fist, then the thumb, then the pointer and middle fingers together, and last, the pointer and pinky finger (see Fig. 2). The fist puts the accent on the first quarter note, sounding vaguely like the tom-toms in G-rated movies about Native Americans and European-American settlers. The tunes and words, however, are vintage camp song. They go through an abstract lyric, "Dum-dum-da-da," whose words imitate carefree humming, then switch to a situation-specific favorite, "Here We Sit Like Birds in the Wilderness":

Here we sit like birds in the wilderness,
birds in the wilderness, birds in the wilderness.
Here we sit like birds in the wilderness, waiting
for our dessert.

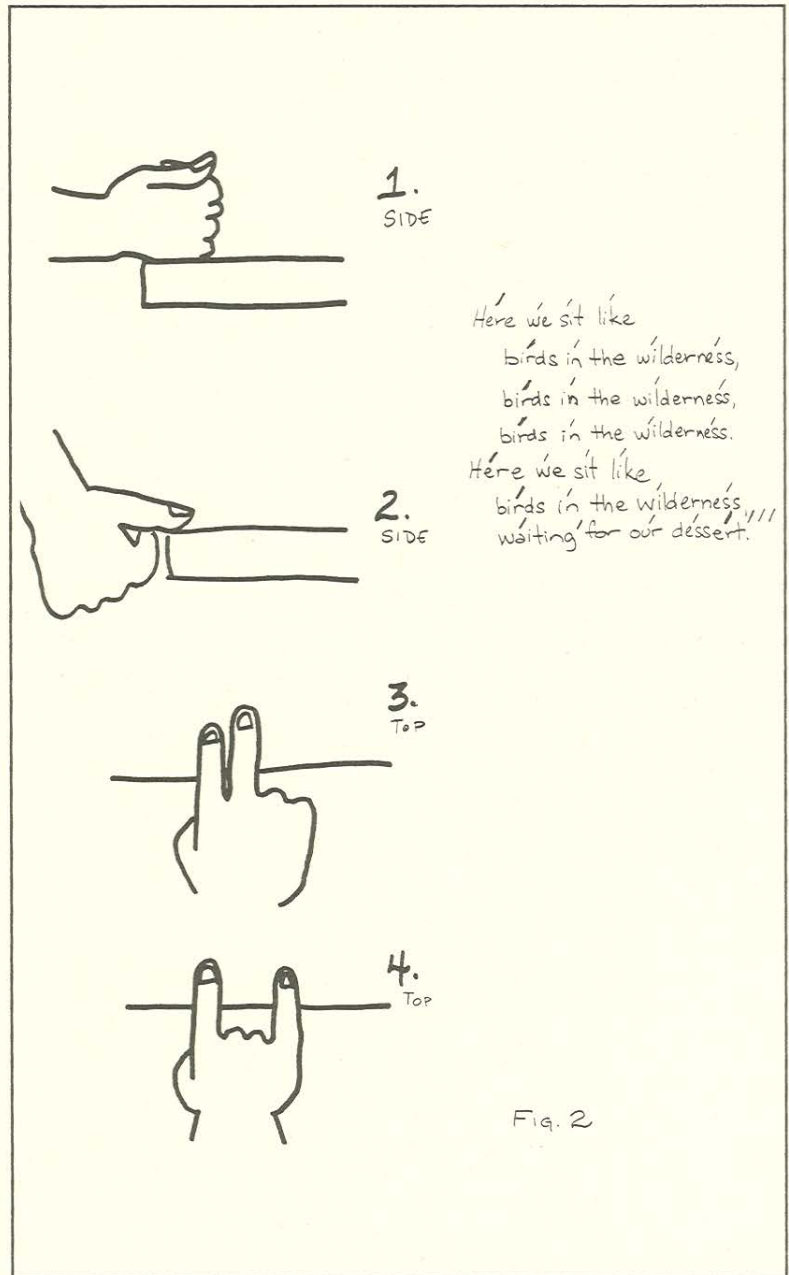
The last syllable coincides with an accented beat, leaving three beats until the verse starts again. . . and again. . . and again. Often annoying the staff and the girls who must serve the dessert, the singing and pounding amuses the girls at the tables and keeps them seated on the benches out of the way of servers and clearers.

When I first considered exploring spatial ordering in Camp Sacajawea's Dining Hall/Main House as an aspect of vernacular architecture studies, such a scene swam up from memory. When at camp, we did not sing that song each night, but often enough for it to qualify as typical of the location. In fact, although we might "practice" the hand motions on makeshift surfaces, we "really" did them only in the Dining Hall. Why did campers do that activity in the



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Dining Hall? And what did it say about the Dining Hall? These two questions initiated my scholarly search, taking me outside of my memory to the memories of a former food service supervisor and others connected with the camp, through twenty years of camp brochures, and outside of Camp Sacajawea for scholarship and popular literature on the American camp experience. In this article, I examine how the Girl Scouting program is enacted through two specific themes at camp: domesticity and "playing Indian," themes that exist in American camping outside of Girl Scouting. The table-banging I remembered touched on both of these themes, although the roughness of the activity might be considered a counter-statement to the domesticity of the place. In any case, this activity points to the Dining Hall as a special place in camp.

A few practical considerations connect the percussive singing with the Dining Hall. I have already suggested a functional approach: the activity served¹ the purpose of keeping restless campers' attention while waiting for dessert, a situation the lyric narrates. On the other hand, the non-specific lyrics of "Dum-dum-da-da" point away from a thematic connection to a musical reason for placing this activity in the Dining Hall. The beat sounded best on thin-topped tables and with a great number of people at once. Few surfaces in camp have the proper edge at the proper height: camp platforms were too low, the waterfront dock, too high. The outdoor "picnic" tables in camp are too thick to sound good and too rough on the hands. The indoor tables in buildings such as the nature center and arts and crafts room presented other problems. In the former, the girls could scare the animals; this would violate the part of the Girl Scout Law involving the natural world: "A Girl Scout is a Friend to Animals" (Law before 1975), or the promise to try to "protect and improve the world around [them]" (Law after 1975). In the arts and crafts room, campers could jiggle the table and ruin someone's project. This would violate two parts of the Law: "A Girl Scout is Courteous" and "A Girl Scout is a Friend to All and a Sister to every other Girl Scout" (old Law); the promises to try to "be friendly and considerate" and "be a sister to every Girl Scout" (new Law). In both the nature center and the arts and crafts center, staff turned campers' attention to individual or small group activities, the wrong frame for an orchestra of fists and fingers.

Carolyn MacDonald provides a reason and a key characteristic of the Dining Hall without a moment's hesitation. When I interviewed her about her experience as a caretaker for sixteen years (1971-87), and as a food service supervisor for a few years during the 1970s, I asked her about this singing that went on during mealtimes. She remembers lots of singing going on at the tables and the percussive accompaniment, although she could not always hear the words clearly from the kitchen where she worked. Considering why this

particular activity occurred almost exclusively in the Dining Hall, MacDonald states, "You weren't all together any place else either."

MacDonald's assessment of the Dining Hall as a central meeting place reflects literature on camping. In *Camps: Their Planning and Management*, Robert E. Wilkinson writes:

there is a need for a large facility that can be used for all-camp programs. It can be a very simple building with a few distinguishing features. It is generally rectangular in shape so that a variety of indoor court games can be played. At other times, it serves as a theater, chapel, dance hall, meeting hall, craft center, or room for games that require little organization. . . . In the absence of a recreation hall, the dining hall, or even the indoor chapel, may have to be used for these activities. (103)

At Camp Sacajawea, the Dining Hall provides the structure for large indoor activities. This large rectangular room is attached to the Main House, an old farmhouse which houses the kitchen facility, the camp office, and bedrooms used in the past for some of the summer staff. Presently campers use the Main House as a lodge.

The 1957 *Standards for Girl Scout Camping: Guides for Better and Safer Camping* requires dining and cooking facilities for established camps and recommends a dining area large enough to accommodate the entire camp at one time (20-21). Technically, when camp was at full capacity, *all* campers and staff could *not* fit into the Dining Hall, being just a unit too many. However, some of the units' programs involved frequent off-site trips so that *all* campers were not on-site at the same time anyway. Moreover, indoor all-camp activities (besides meals) were a rarity, necessitated only by severe weather. For mealtimes, capacity posed no problem, but rather became an asset to programming. Since cooking and eating out-of-doors was one of the traditions of camp, one or more of the units would cook at their unit over an open fire (Carolyn MacDonald). Yet, if weather or emergency dictated, the staff could accommodate the whole camp for an indoor activity between the Dining Hall/Main House and Pocahontas, the large converted barn next door. Both facilities had large hearths for indoor campfire activities (Carolyn MacDonald). In actuality, the Dining Hall could accommodate everyone present in camp on virtually any day. It was, indeed, where indoor all-camp gatherings took place.

Serving the whole camp, the Dining Hall/Main House holds an extremely important position as a hub of camp activity. Although one can see

the themes of domesticity and playing Indian throughout Camp Sacajawea, my research suggests that they are acted out uniquely in the Dining Hall/Main House.

Camping and the Principles of Girl Scouting

Like the rest of camp, the Dining Hall/Main House serves the Girl Scouting program. Girls practice the teachings and values of Girl Scouting through their activities in the camp. Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA), the national organization to which individual Girl Scout troops and facilities belong, spells out the broad goals of Girl Scout camping and how to accomplish those goals through published standards, which they have developed for councils since 1923 (*GS Standards for Girl Scout Camping* 1956,3; hereafter camping standards publications are cited as *GS Standards* with date and page). Councils organize Girl Scouting into regional units, providing administrative and other resources to individual troops. Although a couple of facilities are nationally run (such as National Center West in Wyoming), individual councils run most camps. The Delaware-Raritan Girl Scout Council, which covers central New Jersey from the Delaware River to the Atlantic Ocean, owns Camp Sacajawea, which lies outside the council in northwestern New Jersey. Three councils joined to create the Delaware-Raritan Girl Scout Council in the early 1970s. One of these three, the Raritan Valley Council, bought two adjacent farms in the early 1950s from which they created Camp Sacajawea (Carolyn MacDonald, Kraszewski).

The 1965 *GS Standards* make explicit the connection between camping and the Girl Scouting program:

In Girl Scouting, camping is the Girl Scout program in the out-of-doors. . . . All program is based on the Framework for Progression in the Girl Scout program which is built up the Foundation: Promise and Laws, service, troop management, citizenship, international friendship, health and safety. This foundation permeates all program through activities related to the arts, the home, and the out-of-doors. (*GS Standards* 1965, 8)

Although aspects of the arts and the home exist at camp, the out-of-doors dominates the camping experience. Girl Scout camping encompasses three types of situations: troop camping, day camping, and established camping (*GS Standards* 1957,8). Troop camping means an individual troop camps for at least one night on a site provided or approved by a council. This usually takes place on weekends, school vacations, or sometimes in the summer. At

Camp Sacajawea, the Dining Hall/Main House often houses troops during the winter months, serving as a lodge after the tents have been removed for the season. Under this arrangement, the Dining Hall hearth becomes the locus for campfire activity while other activities take place in the Main House. Where the Dining Hall provides ample space for active games, it is unheated. Between activities outdoors, quiet activities take place in the serving room and kitchen, and the group may opt to sleep upstairs.

Day and established camping (also called resident camping) occur during the summer months at a site where a council provides both staff and facility. Since they purchased the facility in the early 1950s, the council has used Camp Sacajawea for troop camping, established camping, and council-sponsored family camping weekends. Established camp at Sacajawea ended in 1987 (Kraszewski). Presently, the council leases the facility to Sussex County, with the agreement that Delaware-Raritan Girl Scout troops get first choice of camping sites for troop camping (Ruth MacDonald, current council president). This article focuses on Camp Sacajawea's use as an established camp, the situation which has used the Dining Hall/Main House most fully.

Building on the broad connection between the Girl Scout program and camping, the 1965 Girl Scout camping standards outline the following more specific objectives:

- To promote the physical, mental, and spiritual well-being of every girl and leader.
- To develop resourcefulness, initiative, self-reliance, and recognition of the worth and dignity of each individual.
- To provide resources for practices in democratic living.
- To develop a sense of responsibility, qualities of leadership, and an awareness of the capacities of all people.
- To provide an inner satisfaction, a sense of awe and wonder, and a deep enjoyment for both girl and leader.
- To provide a sense of accomplishment.
- To stimulate each girl's awareness of the scope of the natural world. To develop the individual's sense of responsibility to conserve the natural world. (GS *Standards* 1965,6)

Written for the adults who run camps, these objectives dovetail with the old and new Girl Scout Law. While the language differs between the two, both versions of the Law emphasize developing an appreciation for the world beyond oneself (other people, the natural world), developing responsibilities to that world, and developing the practical and interpersonal skills with which to fulfill those responsibilities.

The camp provides the opportunity for girls to practice Girl Scouting values in an environment where everyone else knows and practices the values, and institutional procedures have been designed with Girl Scout values in mind. All staff must be familiar with Girl Scouting. GSUSA's 1967 *Good Counselors Make Good Camps* lists Girl Scout values first under "General Qualifications for All Camp Staff Members." Camp staff must demonstrate "Acceptance of and adherence to the purposes and principles of Girl Scouting as embodied in the Promise and Laws. Some knowledge of the Girl Scout program" (9). Although the title of the book calls attention to the counselor's job, the book applies these general qualifications to all the staff, including administrative staff, special programming staff (waterfront, nature center, arts and crafts), and the food service staff from supervisor to dishwasher.

Linking social values to camping is not unique to Girl Scouting; many social organizations, such as religious groups, do the same. In fact, the American Camping Association (ACA), the body which provides accreditation for camps throughout the United States, defines camping by its social objectives as well as its setting. Camping is:

A sustained experience which provides a creative, recreational and educational opportunity in group living in the out-of-doors. It utilizes trained leadership and the resources of the natural surroundings to contribute to each camper's mental, physical, social, and spiritual growth.
(ACA 3)

A camp volunteers to follow the ACA standards and apply for ACA accreditation, which includes an on-site visit. The accreditation helps parents and guardians judge whether a specific camp is safe and suitable for their children (Moreau 112). Although some camps choose not to go through the accreditation process, Camp Sacajawea maintains its accreditation, advertises it on a sign attached to the Main House (which can be seen from the road), and includes its ACA status in camp brochures.

The Dining Hall/Main House as Threshold

The lyric "here we sit like birds in the wilderness, waiting for our dessert" appeals because of its humor, the irony of wild birds having dessert. Yet, the juxtaposition of a wilderness setting and the civilized activity of eating dessert fits the Dining Hall/Main House, which sits both on the edge of camp and on the edge of the road. As the gateway to the rest of the camp, the Dining

Hall/Main House serves as the threshold or liminal space between this ideal community and the rest of the world. The term "liminal" comes from the Latin for threshold (Webster); its root is in spatial relationships.²

In several ways, the Dining Hall/Main House has connections to and similarities with both the natural, ideal living conditions of the camp and the world outside where the campers and staff live during the rest of the year. For instance, for most years of resident camp, campers entered camp when buses delivered them to the parking lot by the road in front of the Dining Hall/Main House (later, buses began to use a newer parking lot, still by the road, but closer to the Ranger's House than the Dining Hall/Main House). From there, camp staff would organize the girls into groups (units) determined by what program the girls had registered for, and walk them into the heart of the camp, to the sites where they would live for the session. At the end of the session, the buses would meet the girls in front of the Dining Hall/Main House again and take them back to central locations in their home communities.

The Dining Hall/Main House serves as a threshold for communication to the camp, as well as the bringing communications to the campers themselves. The mail carrier did not go to each individual campsite, but dropped the mail at the Main House. While counselors distributed mail to the girls, each staff member had his or her own mailbox in the downstairs hallway of the Main House. A mailbox for outgoing mail, which both staff and campers would use, was hung on the wall of the Dining Hall. Voice communication to campers and staff also entered the camp through the Dining Hall/Main House. The Main House contained the camp office and the camp's telephone line. Several years' brochures state that parents should telephone campers only in case of emergency and should not expect to speak to the camper directly at that time; messages would be relayed to campers by staff. Directly or indirectly (through messages), the Dining Hall/Main House linked the camp with written and oral communication to the outside world.

The camp office in the Main House provided the work place for the Camp Director and Assistant Camp Director and place for all camp business. From here, the camp staff would interface with parents, vendors, and others. Gwen Mitchell's *Handbook for Camp Directors and Administrators in a Girl Scout Council*, a GSUSA publication, places ultimate responsibility for food service and other camp services on camp directors, spelling out their duty to maintain connections with the outside vendors necessary to run the camp (16-17). Although the camp director was ultimately responsible, Carolyn MacDonald recalls that it was her duty as food supervisor to order the food and oversee its delivery and consumption. Deliveries—most frequently food—entered the camp by way of the Main House. Food service depended on the outside world and connected the camp with the outside world through

the Dining Hall/Main House. Within the boundaries of the camp, almost all food service activities take place in the Dining Hall/Main House. Eating is the locus of activity in the Dining Hall, the food having been ordered and prepared in the Main House. The only exceptions are the snacks and packed lunches eaten on day trips out of camp or the meals planned and prepared by the girls at their units' campfires. Yet, even these would be checked for nutritional value by the food supervisor (Carolyn MacDonald), a practice guaranteed in the camp brochures. Eating on the trail or preparing food in the unit is part of imitating Native American and pioneer life. Following GSUSA guidelines, program organizers provide the opportunity for the girls to learn practical skills in food preparation under unusual circumstances, work cooperatively, and appreciate nature together.

Besides serving as the threshold to the world outside camp, the Dining Hall/Main House lies in symbolic and spatial relationship with the other places within the camp proper. I turn now to two major themes evident in space ordering at Camp Sacajawea: playing Indian and domesticity (playing house).

Playing Indian at Girl Scout Camp

"Playing Indian" has a long tradition at mainstream American camps, and Girl Scout camps are no exception. In "The Tribe Called Wannabee: Playing Indian in America and Europe," Rayna Green states that

since the invasion of North America by those "red hairy men" in the fifteenth century, non-Indians have found the performance of "playing Indian" a most compelling and obviously satisfying form of traditional expression. (30)

She makes a distinction between playing Indian and being a Native American when she states that not only did Europeans play Indian, but that they also made tribal peoples "play Indian" so they could "export the performances back to Europe" (30). In *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture*, Daniel Francis expresses the following distinction between the Indian and the Native American:

The Indian began as a White man's mistake, and became a White man's fantasy. Through the prism of White hopes, fears and prejudices, indigenous Americans would be seen to have lost contact with reality and to have become "Indians": that is, anything non-Natives wanted them to be. (5)

Presently, I will concentrate on the nature of playing Indian³ at Camp Sacajawea and how this activity differentiates the Dining Hall/Main House from the rest of the group.

In the scholarly and popular literature, some articles explore playing Indian at camp, but most concentrate explicitly or implicitly on the male experience. If mentioned at all, Girl Scouting is frequently treated almost as if it were just Boy Scouting in skirts. Both Green and Francis focus their treatment of playing Indian at camp on boys' organizations, such as Lord Robert Baden-Powell's Boy Scouts⁴ and Ernest Thompson Seton's Woodcraft Indians. The Woodcraft Indians predated and had an early influence on Boy Scouting, but eventually the two organizations diverged because Seton wished to emphasize pacifism while Baden-Powell wished to emphasize a military metaphor (Francis 144-68).

Green notes the paramilitary nature when she writes of Boy Scouting:

Lord Baden-Powell's para-military outdoor education movement merges with neo-French revolutionary philosophy, and the French passion for natural men comes to be embodied in the Indian, who will represent the [Boy] Scouting ideal of manly independence. Learning to walk, stalk, hunt, survive like an "Indian," to produce beaded and feathered authentic outfits, to dance and sing authentic music, to produce tools and weapons, are the skills later to become fixed in the Order of the Arrow, Scouting's highest achievement. (40-41)⁵

Green makes the connection between teaching independence, playing Indian, and youth programs. Learning self-reliance and independence through playing Indian may indeed be considered "manly" when looking at the issue from the point of view of Boy Scouting, but the picture is incomplete. Although not emphasizing playing Indian to the extent or in the same way as Boy Scouting does, Girl Scouting also uses survival skills (hiking safety, lashing and knots, building shelters, knowing which plants are poisonous) with an Indian metaphor. In a passing nod to Girl Scouting, Green writes:

The [Boy] Scouting reification of the Indian, as Scout played *him*, (note that, by this time [the time of the development of Boy Scouting in the 20th century], the Indian is a definitely male and be-feathered Lord of the Plains), affects more variants, some later practiced by the Girl Scouts and Campfire Girls, which concentrate, for their dramatic reenactments, less on paramilitary skill and more on crafts and nature worship. (41)

The representation of these specific youth organizations appears incomplete, yet Green makes a valuable point. On the down side, Green's use of "affects

more variants" and "later" seems to imply a greater influence of Baden-Powell's program on these other programs than there actually was. As Francis writes, Campfire Girls grew out of Seton's Woodcraft Indians, and it is therefore natural that Campfire Girls would have a different—not paramilitary—emphasis in its version of playing Indian. The Girl Scouts, too, have an inheritance from Seton's program. In the 1929 revision of the 1920 Handbook, the Preface gives "grateful acknowledgments" to "Mr. Ernest Thompson Seton and The Woodcraft League, and Doubleday, Page & Co. for the section and plates on 'Woodcraft'," as well as to Robert Baden-Powell and others.

Like much of the general public, Green shows limited understanding of the early divergence between Girl Scouting and Boy Scouting in the United States (in her defense, Girl Scouting is not the focus of her article). Begun in 1908 in England (Webster), Baden-Powell's Boy Scout program led to the founding of Girl Guiding in England, founded and developed by Lord Baden-Powell and his sister, Agnes (Foreword, "How Scouting Began," Robert Baden-Powell, *Scouting for Girls* [May 1919]). Brought to America in 1912 by Juliette Gordon Low, Girl Guides in America was renamed Girl Scouts "within a few months" (*Scouting for Girls* 13). The organization has operated separately from Boy Scouts of America from its beginning and began to develop differently from both organizations initiated by Lord Baden-Powell, Boy Scouting and Girl Guiding.⁶ Today, Girl Scouts in the United States honor Juliette Low's contribution by celebrating March 12th (the day in 1912 when the program began in Low's native Savannah, GA [Eubanks 11]) as the birthday of Girl Scouting and Low's Birthday, October 31st, as Founder's Day (Eubanks 31). Along with other members of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, American Girl Scouts celebrate Thinking Day or World Association Day on February 22nd, the birthday of both Lord and Lady Baden Powell (Lady Olave Baden-Powell took a leadership role in Girl Guiding early on). A contrast to Lord Baden-Powell's paramilitarism and disapproval of Seton's pacifism, Thinking Day "presents an opportunity for Girl Scouts and Girl Guides to reflect on world peace and international friendship" (Eubanks 35). Girls in the United States are much more familiar with Juliette Low's leadership than the influence of the Baden-Powell family.

Beginning just four years after the Boy Scouting program and one or two after Girl Guiding, Girl Scouting certainly shares roots with the two programs. However, in 83 years of operating independently (over 95% of its history), these programs have developed quite differently. Green does not acknowledge the self-reliance and confidence girls develop through learning wilderness survival skills because she interprets those skills as "manliness." However, she makes a valid point about Girl Scouting's stressing nature

worship. A statement by the National Camping Committee in April, 1963, makes explicit the spiritual character of Girl Scout camping:

Camping must fulfill the needs and interests of [the] young. . . by offering every Girl Scout camper a fully enriched program and a deeply meaningful social and spiritual experience in the natural world. (GS *Standards* 1965,5)

The objectives of camping as expressed above by the Girl Scout standards attest to the aspect of nature worship with language such as "sense of awe and wonder." These objectives direct awareness toward "the scope of the natural world" and the "responsibility to conserve the natural world" (GS *Standards* 1965, 6).

Daniel Francis also mentions the connection between nature and playing Indian, framing Seton's Woodcraft Indian program as a response to growing urbanization. From the point of view of European-Americans,

the Indian retained qualities that "modern man" had lost. If civilization was artificial, frenetic, and soulless, the Indian seemed to live a more authentic existence, closer to nature and basic human values. (153-54)

In a 1993 column in *The New Yorker* entitled "Injun Summer," Daniel Menaker echoes the attitude toward modernism that Francis attributes to Seton. Menaker knows that playing Indian is "politically incorrect" as well as being historically inaccurate; however,

it implies a code of conduct and a relationship to nature at odds with and superior to the kinds of lives the campers and their families presumed to lead. Even a dented and misapprehended ideal is better than no ideal at all. (166)

Where Seton has no awareness of what Francis would call the "Imaginary" quality of his Indian, Menaker recognizes the fantasy and embraces it anyway. While valuing nature and playing Indian like Seton and Menaker, Girl Scouting tends to emphasize looking forward or living in the present, rather than re-enacting the past. The 1929 Girl Scouting handbook (*Scouting for Girls*, Revised Edition) suggests using the Indian metaphor to look forward:

The Girl Scouts of today, while they have no new lands to scout into, can scout in the new ways of life that our changing civilization has brought us. They find that there can be as much joy in

learning the best ways of doing things in our new era, as there was in our new and undiscovered country. The best way to live, to play, to help others, to build a home may be filled with as much adventure in New York or San Francisco today as there was in crossing the Ohio or Mississippi a hundred years ago. (15)

As one would expect of an American youth publication in the 1920s, this passage contains a Euro-centric viewpoint. At the same time, it plays Indian in a new way, bringing the term "scout" into the present, whereas most views of the Imaginary Indian relegate the Native American to the past. The attitude toward scouting expressed in *Scouting for Girls* does not restrict the idea of "scouting" to its military or woodcraft meanings, either. Perhaps the downplaying of these two more obvious manifestations of playing Indian in Girl Scouting influences Green's emphasis on the male Scouting program in her interpretation of playing Indian.

Although concentrating on the male experience, both Green and Francis suggest that playing Indian provides a certain freedom for marginalized groups. Green speaks in terms of race and gender:

Inevitably and eventually [playing Indian] draws women, even blacks, into the peculiar boundaries of its performance, offering them a unique opportunity-through playing Indian-of escaping the conventional and often highly restrictive boundaries of their fixed cultural identities in gender or race. (31)

For Green, playing Indian is tightly entwined with the male military sphere, yet its manifestation of "other" allows a degree of freedom for females. In a discussion of children playing Cowboys and Indians, she states that her informal survey revealed that most children wanted to play the Cowboy role because they "did not like getting beat." Of those preferring Indian, the higher percentage were female who "are very clear about what attracts them, that is, the 'costume,' the yelling and 'acting out' which appears to accompany the role, and the 'underdog' aspects the role entails" (54). This "acting out" may factor in the campers' delight in pounding and singing at the table between courses, activities not common and probably not even permitted in most homes or school cafeterias.

Rather than addressing race or gender issues, Francis speaks in terms of power imbalance based on age:

Too high-spirited and willful to perform the essential business of industrial society, the Imaginary Indian is the perfect model for youngsters chafing against the rules and duties of the adult world. Children love animals; so does the Imaginary Indian. Children

love to roam freely in the woods. So does the Imaginary Indian. Children love secret ceremonies and dressing up in costume; so does the Imaginary Indian. Children yearn to perform brave deeds in combat; so does the Imaginary Indian. Children are in rebellion against the established order. So is the Imaginary Indian. (144-45)

Francis concentrates on the connections between children's culture and the perception of the Imaginary Indian's culture, though he exhibits a touch of androcentrism. Where Green recognizes female organizations' distaste for military play, Francis includes a mention of combat. Francis seems to speak more of male children than all children, unless he is including brave acts of self-defense and caring for the wounded. There certainly are girls who enjoy aggressive play and reenacting conflict, but studies such as Green's, Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice*, and Deborah Tannen's *You Just Don't Understand* point to the phenomenon of females (adults and children) valuing conflict avoidance and resolution.

Where Green and Francis emphasize the male warrior tradition of playing Indian, Camp Sacajawea embodies another image of the Indian, one stemming from European-American perception of the Iroquois nations.⁷ Carolyn MacDonald states, "See, that's what the names come from, the five nations of the Indians of upstate New York." In addition to Iroquois itself, other campsites include Onondaga, Mohawk, Oneida, Cayuga, and Tuscarora. Seneca also existed until it fell into such disrepair that the council eliminated it (Carolyn MacDonald). Of the other four campsites, one is named Shoshone for Sacajawea's tribe, one for the Apache, and two reflect resident camp programs (see Fig. 3).

The placement of the units and the other facilities creates a somewhat cohesive Indian nation covering the southeastern side of the camp (most of the land). Administrative sites, such as the infirmary, Dining Hall/Main House, ranger's house, and Pocahontas, lie along the northern border of camp. On the western side sit the modern sports fields and two units with special interests: girls in the Dolphin unit, overlooking the lake, develop water skills; while in the Pioneer unit, girls sleep in covered wagons and learn early settlers' crafts. In the southeastern part of the camp, the Indian sites stand together, interrupted only by wash houses, the flag pole, and the nature center. Totem Pole Hill, where all-camp campfires took place, lies at the southeastern corner of the camp, anchoring the Indian metaphor with a tall totem pole.

One might assume that the council named the sites after the Iroquois in recognition of the simple fact of proximity. In northwestern New Jersey, Camp Sacajawea lies just south of the Iroquois lands. Yet, it also lies close to



the lands of the Lenni-Lenape associated with New Jersey, but neither Lenape nor the European-derived Delaware appear in camp names. The council also chose not to use names, such as Piscataway, that reflected Native Americans associated with the lands near the council headquarters.

The connection between the Girl Scout camp and playing Indian Iroquois style reflects perceived values held in common: both emphasize the value of peace, safety, democracy, cooperative work, and women. In *The Iroquois and the Founding of the American Nation*, Donald A. Grinde, Jr., describes the Iroquois culture before and coexisting with the European colonies. He traces the process through which Deganawidah and Hiawatha secured the Great Peace and established laws so that "individual rights, safety and justice were assured" (8). For instance, vengeful murder (blood feud) was outlawed, and wampum strings and belts were substituted for the life of the murderer as recompense to the family of the victim (8). In "Iroquoian Culture History: A General Evaluation," William N. Fenton names four cardinal principles of Iroquois policy, all of which foster cooperative living: "(1) health, peace. . . , (2) strength, civil authority. . . , (3) truth, righteousness, . . . (4) the great law, or the commonwealth" (262). Fenton emphasizes the pervasiveness of these values: "These themes both exist on a worldly or political level and attain a level of supernatural significance through the Deganawidah epic" (262). Fenton further demonstrates Euro-Americans' association of these communal values with the Iroquois when he refers to colonist Conrad Weiser's advice to be truthful, give one's best, and show courage when dealing with them. These Iroquois values resemble the Girl Scouting values that emphasize the strength of the individual and the community. The introduction to the 1965 Girl Scout camping standards mentions "international friendship, health and safety" (8) as parts of the Foundation of the Girl Scout program, while in the specific objectives for camping, "To promote the physical, mental, and spiritual well-being of every girl and leader" heads the list (6).

Grinde's work traces the influence of Iroquois governing practices on the democratic government developed for the United States.⁸ As in other Girl Scout camps and troops (GS *Standards* 1965, 8), Camp Sacajawea's program emphasizes collective and representative decision-making. In an introduction to the 1976 camp brochure, Janet B. Cook, then president of the Delaware-Raritan Girl Scout Council, writes that after becoming acquainted with her new surroundings, "the girl becomes deeply involved in the camp and its decision-making through camp council and camp-wide events." Collective effort characterizes work in Girl Scouting and Grinde's assessment of the Iroquois life. Grinde cites collective work ("economic democracy") and collective ownership as characteristic of the Iroquois (24-25).

Fenton concurs that "institutional cooperation and poor relief is deeply imbedded in Iroquoian culture" (264).

The Iroquois value of women also makes Iroquois names appropriate for camp sites. On a very basic level, the Iroquois emphasized the value of women in relation to the value of men.⁹ While the murder of a man required the payment of 20 strings of wampum, the murder of a woman required 30 strings (Grinde 8). Although fees were substituted for vengeful murder in European culture, the woman was not worth more than the man. In the case of the Anglo-Saxon *wergeld*, literally the "man money," social rank determined the fee and men outranked women. In "Eastern Woodlands Community Typology and Acculturation," John Witthoft emphasizes women's relative importance in the economic life of the Eastern Woodlands Native Americans:

Women's social roles were central, and men's economic roles were subsidiary. Male social and political roles were likewise secondary. Despite male emphasis on warfare, war lacked major economic motivation. (71-72).

Similarly, Girl Scouting encourages women's power in the economic arena by encouraging girls to think of their careers (e.g., *Scouting for Girls* handbook [1929 revised edition], *Worlds to Explore* handbook [1977]).

In addition to economic power, women also held power in Iroquois family and tribal government. In this matrilineal system, women headed the clans and their sub-units, the *otiiனர்* and the hearth (Grinde 1). Although women could not serve as chiefs, the heads of the *otiiனர்* (women) collectively chose the chiefs (Grinde 15). Likewise, women appointed the male delegates and deputies who spoke at tribal councils. On an on-going basis, women collectively "formulated issues and questions to be debated and acted upon in the councils" and recommended which position the representative should advocate (Grinde 2). Fenton also assumes the strong political position of women, although he debates with others the consistency of this strength (266-77). This strength included influence over warfare, despite the fact that women did not battle for lead warriors. When the men called for war, women had the power to prevent or encourage war through their disapproval or approval (Grinde 14).

Although one might question the extent of the Iroquois women's power in relation to their male delegates, the system gave far more power to women than did the European culture of the same period. While Iroquois women were the only ones to "vote" for representatives, it took another two centuries for female citizens of the United States to get any vote. In terms of influence over war, Julia Ward Howe created Mother's Day in the United States as a day for

women to speak out against war for the safety of their children. Later, even this relatively powerless observance had been subverted into a day to talk about mothers, ceasing to be a day for mothers to speak out. As an organization dedicated to developing girls' "resourcefulness, initiative, self-reliance, and recognition of the worth and dignity of each individual" (*GS Standards* 1965,6), the council appropriately associates their place with a people reputed to value women.

Playing Indian in the Dining Hall

Camp Sacajawea pays tribute to two individual women through naming. Pocahontas and Sacajawea herself. In terms of spatial relations, these names bring playing Indian back to the camp's threshold, the area of the Dining Hall/ Main House.

Like the Dining Hall/Main House, Pocahontas separates the camp from the road. Arts and crafts, lodging for kitchen staff, and, for a time, the nature center were housed here. Although an Indian, Pocahontas resided in the "white world" for much of her life, marrying a white man and moving to England, where she died. In "The Mother of Us All: Pocahontas Reconsidered," Philip Young connects her betrayal of her tribe (for instance, she warned Captain John Smith of her father's imminent attack) with her glorification by whites. According to whites, she was a good Indian because she "recognized" the superiority of white culture. Young also connects the Pocahontas figure with Ceres, Demeter, and Gaea. Becoming "a fertility-goddess, the mother of us all" (408), Pocahontas fits the nature worship of Girl Scouting's version of the imaginary Indian.

Girl Scouting has long admired Sacajawea even more than Pocahontas. In the 1929 revised edition of the 1920 handbook, *Scouting for Girls*, Scouting equals discovery (see above). The text asks girls to apply this concept to the present; the past just provides models for new adventures.

Our early history is sprinkled thickly with brave, handy girls, who were certainly Girl Scouts, though they never belonged to a patrol, nor recited the Girl Scout Laws. But they lived the laws, those strong young pioneers, and we can stretch our hands to them across the years when we read of them. (15)

The handbook gives two examples of "brave, handy girls," first Sacajawea, then Louisa Mat Alcott. The description of Sacajawea praises her bravery, ability to resolve conflict ("she induced the hostile Shoshones to act as guides" [15]), knowledge of nature, resourcefulness, ability to care for herself and others (performing the role of guide "with her papoose on her back" [15]),

and making a mark on the landscape: "Sacajawea had no maps to study—she made maps, and roads have been built over her footsteps" (16). Camp Sacajawea is one of many Girl Scout camps in the United States by the same name; New Jersey alone holds two Camp Sacajaweas. In the camp under study, Sacajawea is referenced physically through the campsite named "Shoshone" and indirectly in the Dining Hall through the large cut-out of a bird, the most prominent single decoration in the Hall. At first glance, the bird looks like an Indian-style Thunderbird. It also resembles the eagle, fitting Geoffrey Turner's research. Turner states that many Native Americans believed that Thunderbirds were eagles or at least had the shape of an eagle (50). To the Algonkians (from the northeastern region of the United States), the Thunderbird, bringer of rain, is a good force (Turner 42). The Dining Hall bird has jagged marks resembling lightning on its chest. One wonders why a Thunderbird was chosen by a camp (why invite rain to a camp?) until one remembers that Sacajawea means "The Bird Woman" (*Scouting for Girls* 15).

Another Indian image, the War Canoe, also hangs in the Dining Hall. Hung in the rafters at the center of the hall for most of the year (and presently on a permanent basis), the Canoe was taken down annually. Joy Kraszewski, the Council employee responsible for business related to the camp, has some memories of the War Canoe. Each year, some staff members would take the Canoe down, repaint it, and "redo" it. Then the staff would take it out on the water on a special occasion, perhaps during the end of the camp ceremony. For this ceremony, held at the end of each session, every girl in camp would make a small raft (about 6ft by 6ft at the largest) by lashing together small sticks. The girl would affix a candle to the raft, then light the candle and set the raft afloat in White Lake. Curiously enough, the War Canoe appears to have little to do with war. Perhaps named to reflect the dominant war-like Indian play Green emphasizes, the Girl Scouts subvert the symbol into a ceremony that emphasizes collective work (fixing the canoe) and unity among campers. Both the War Canoe and the Sacajawea/Thunderbird image bring playing Indian into the Dining Hall.

Domesticity and the Dining Hall/Main House

One can argue that the Dining Hall itself is an artifact of playing Indian—playing Iroquois or Lenape specifically. The Iroquois linguistic grouping is known as the Ganonsyoni, "people of the longhouse" (Grinde 1). Rather than living spread out in different structures, the Iroquois lived with several families, several hearths, under one roof—the roof of the long house. A rectangular structure with a gabled roof, the Dining Hall resembles the long house physically. Speaking metaphorically, the units (named for the different

Iroquois nations) coming together to eat in the Dining Hall echo the different families living together in the long house. Rather than having separate hearths, these groups had separate tables. The units did not cook separately in the Dining Hall, but their food was served by table. A couple of girls from each unit were assigned to help the kitchen staff by bringing the food from the Serving Room to their units' tables.

Similarly, the "Delaware Big House Ceremonial" related by Elisabeth Tooker dictates the use and form of the structure. The end of the sponsor's concluding remarks for the ninth night of the ceremonial also mentions serving practices in the Big House Ceremonial: "Attendants, bring into the House your cooking and your dishes. Each one who brings a dish is to be given some hominy and meat" (Tooker, *Native* 120).¹⁰ Tooker notes that the six ceremony attendants represent the three Delaware clans, one woman and one man from each (*Native* 106).

The Dining Hall resembles the Delaware big house as well as the Iroquois long house. Also rectangular, the Dining Hall has entrances at all four directionals. The western entrance has two doorways—in and out—to the kitchen and the Main House. The girls serving each night resemble the Delaware attendants in that they represent domestic units (the camp units or clans) and their service is temporary, not permanent. While hearths define the Iroquoian long house and doors define the Delaware big house, the sole hearth and multiple doors in the Dining Hall dominate this structure. The Dining Hall's resemblance to the long or big house provides a perfect example of following GS camping standard: "All buildings are simple and in keeping with the objectives of Girl Scouting (GS *Standards* 1957, 18). Appropriately, the manifestation of playing Indian in the Dining Hall-as-long-house emphasizes a domestic metaphor, for the Dining Hall/Main House serves as the locus of domesticity and stability for the entire camp. Where the 1965 Girl Scout *Standards* relate activities to "the arts, the home, and the out-of-doors"(8), the Dining Hall/Main House largely manifests "the home," as much as do the tents where the girls sleep.¹¹

Most obviously, architecture reveals the domestic image. The tents are impermanent and the buildings in the heart of camp are more rugged-looking than the Dining Hall/Main House. About ten or fifteen years ago, the Naval Construction Battalion built a shelter (a peaked roof on posts) at each camp site (Kraszewski). The walled buildings off the road (latrines, waterfront cabin, nature center, infirmary) appear cabin-like. On the other hand, the Main House, like the Ranger's House, is a converted farm house. In design, the Main House is a side gable, four bay, two storey, double pile construction with two end chimneys, attached to the Dining Hall on the east end. The council converted this structure to accommodate the large numbers of people

in an established camp, but the functional use of space is consistent with a farm house. Bedrooms are still upstairs. Bathrooms are in ordinary locations upstairs and down. The hallways appear original. The kitchen is still the kitchen with added "big stuff" such as institutional grade grills, stoves, and freezer (Kraszewski). Only the traditional parlor and dining room have been replaced with the camp office (which also houses bunks now) and additional food service rooms: one with a large oven and storage, a small hallway with a storage closet, the Serving Room and the Dish Room. A change to the eastern chimney acknowledges that the Dining Hall replaces the Main House's living room/parlor as the structure's primary social space. While the chimney appears attached to the Main House like any other farm house, it serves the hearth in the Dining Hall, not a structure in the Main House. The western chimney appears to service some heating device located in the cellar.

In addition to having domestic architecture, the Dining Hall/Main House contains much of the camp's domestic element because of its role in food preparation and consumption. In many cultures, food, nurturance, home, and family are metaphorically related. Food Service both reassures the parents (the children's "real" domestic authority) and establishes the camp's caretaking role through the treatment of food issues in the brochures. Most of the brochures have a brief message on food resembling if not identical to the following: "Nutritious meals are dietician planned. Provision for snacks is made. Food packages should not be sent to camp" (1973). As required in the food service director's job description (GSUSA, *Good Counselors* 18; Carolyn MacDonald), some brochures additionally assure that while girls learn to plan their own meals, camp staff will not allow them to suffer nutritionally in the process: "menus planned by campers for cookouts and trips are checked" (1974). Other brochures impress upon parents that the camp is a wilderness location and that, for this reason, parents need to defer to camp staff at times: "the chipmunks might get the goodies you send" (1975).

As an institution serving food, the camp must also reassure legal authorities as to their competence in taking responsibility for the campers' food service. In a restaurant, only public health and safety (e.g., cleanliness, food storage) are at issue because adults order for themselves and supervise their children. A camp, however, also resembles a school in that the food service staff takes responsibility for meeting the children's nutritional needs. In addition to the legal requirements they meet, the camp staff reassures parents that they can take over the food-related domestic duties through their compliance with American Camping Association standards (earning them ACA accreditation) and national Girl Scouting standards. ACA and GSUSA standards contain specific requirements for cleanliness, staff training and

qualifications, and food preparation and storage. The Girl Scout Councils use the following statement by the ACA insignia printed on their collective brochures:

This ACA insignia is only given to camps that have been officially visited and approved by the American Camping Association for meeting all their standards. Our camps also meet all GSUSA standards and are licensed by their State Health Department. (1978)

Thus, the camp references three organizations with authority to prove their qualifications concerning food, an aspect of the domestic sphere.

The procedure for serving and consuming food in the Dining Hall imitates the domestic sphere. According to GS camping standards and other publications (Mitchell 16-17), girls with dietary restrictions can expect accommodation at camp: "Meals are planned with consideration for the laws of fast and abstinence and for the dietary observances of the various religious faiths represented in the camp" (GS *Standards* 1957, 25). Camp staff reinforces religious practices by leading the girls in singing grace. Appropriate to camp, favorite graces such as "Johnny Appleseed" and "Back of the Bread" include references to nature in the provision of food, resembling the Iroquois ceremonials (Tooker, *Native* 268-81).

Starting with grace, the process of a meal in the Dining Hall resembles a meal in most girls' homes. Food is served "family style," meaning serving bowls and eating utensils sit on the table. Unlike "cafeteria style," where people choose their food from an assembly line and eat from individual trays, "family style" adds a domestic feel to an otherwise institutional space. Conversely, eating in the units had less of a domestic character. Although girls could participate in food preparation in the units, they often cooked individual portions (e.g., hot dogs or s'mores over the grill) and would not all find a place at the table at one time.

Other features of Dining Hall procedures resembled the world back home. Carolyn MacDonald recalls a Camp Sacajawea food custom in which the camp staff played the domestic role of parental authority. When a girl did not like a certain food, she nevertheless was required to eat a small portion, called a "no-thank-you serving." Much like sharing duties with siblings at home, girls take their turns setting and clearing the table, and bringing food to the table.¹² The meal did not end until a member of staff gave the girls permission to leave their seats—just as many families require children to ask their parents' permission to "be excused."

With its sit-down meals, the Dining Hall demonstrates a formality not seen elsewhere in camp—perhaps with the exception of occasions when

clergy visited the camp to conduct a religious service. At one time, a clothing practice reinforced this formality. The 1972 brochure instructs girls to bring the official camp uniform,¹³ which "is the only required item of clothing and is worn on Sundays and for evening meals. "On the "Suggested Clothing List" in the brochure, the word "required" follows "camp uniform." In the 1973 and 1974 "Suggested Clothing List," the word "optional" follows "camp uniform," and no explanatory sentence details its use at camp. By 1975, the camp uniform no longer appears on the "Suggested Clothing List" and is not mentioned anywhere else in the brochure. This custom may have paralleled the old custom in many homes of "dressing for dinner." Although washing up before sitting at the table is still required of many children at home and at camp, the dress requirement has certainly relaxed in both places.

The "civilized" domestic sphere within the camp serves a vital function, yet seems to contradict the nature-based camping narrative. Almost twenty years of camp brochures mention the structure only three times and in only two ways: "the attractive dining hall is dominated by a massive fireplace" (1980, 1981) and "our dining hall accommodates the entire camp and a food service supplies well-balanced meals" (1986). Most brochures describe food accommodations without reference to where it is usually prepared and served. Instead of descriptions of the domestic structures at camp, descriptions of the camp's natural features and the program's activities dominate the literature.

The camping terrain is one of open fields, rolling fields [sic], pine woods and lakes. White Lake is a natural crater lake used for swimming and boating (including sailing). Lake Nicholas is used for the study of pond life as well as for fishing; a marsh area surrounds the "edge of pond" habitat. The camp is close enough to the Delaware River and the Appalachian Trail for both to be explored by advanced campers. (1975)

Daniel Moreau's 1988 article, "Summer Camps: The Golden Oldies," describes the outdoor experience much like Camp Sacajawea's brochures. Sacajawea's literature follows this more general trend in camp literature of emphasizing natural features and outdoor activities. The absence of the Dining Hall/Main Hall in the literature points to its specialness as a counterpoint in the camp at large. Necessary for bulk food service and administrative purposes, this structure runs against the natural world aesthetic of youth camping, yet supports Girl Scout principles of developing girls' skills and responsibilities as citizens through communal living.

Conclusion--A Special Place with Tradition

As a site for most meals, all food storage, the camp's business office, and the gathering area in case the whole camp needs to come indoors, the Dining Hall/Main House obviously has great importance. As a common space, it is a natural choice for physical tributes to tradition. On the exposed rafters of the Dining Hall hang tin can lids, one next to the other, all approximately the same 6" diameter. Each is the creation of a specific group of girls, most represent groups of Counselors-in-Training (CITs). Painted brightly with pictures or words meaningful to the girls they represent, many draw the nature narratives and playing Indian into the Dining Hall. Each lid declares the year, going back as far as the 1950s. When I visited the camp on a cold Presidents' Weekend in February 1995, a troop of Cadettes from Wareton, NJ, were using the Main House as a lodge. During the afternoon, they played games from around the world—running games in the spacious but unheated Dining Hall, sitting games in the heated Serving Room. Meanwhile, one more bright tin can lid sat drying on the serving counter.

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NOTES

1. At first glance, the mixture of verb tenses here may seem erratic and even arbitrary to the reader. However, I have painstakingly edited the text to reflect the variables in the material. While the structures still exist, summer resident camp ceased in the late 1980s, so I describe many of the practices in the past tense, while descriptions of the building are in the present tense (except where changes in structure occur). In terms of Girl Scouting in general, some practices still occur while others have been discontinued, and tense reflects each situation.

2. In *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, Victor Turner contrasts van Gennep's use of separation-margin-reaggregation with his use of preliminal-liminal-postliminal, saying that van Gennep employed the second group "with primary reference to spatial transitions" (166).

3. Like Francis, I will use the term "Indian" to denote the white culture's image of the indigenous American people. When speaking about the actual people, I will use "Native American." When quoting others, I will use their terminology.

4. Although the Boy Scouts legally changed their name to Scouting USA, I will continue to use the term Boy Scout for ease of differentiation between the two programs and in recognition that Boy Scouting is not the sole Scouting program in the USA.

5. The Order of the Arrow is not Boy Scouting's highest achievement, but rather a fraternity within Boy Scouting open to both children and adults, which can be

joined by passing certain requirements (e.g., service and an ordeal) without earning the rank of Eagle Scout, Boy Scouting's highest rank. Although Eagle Scout is Boy Scouting's highest rank, an Eagle Scout can also earn the Bronze, Silver, and Gold Palms—Boy Scouting's highest achievement (Boy Scouts of America, *Revised Handbook* 404).

6. Unlike the United States, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts in many countries belong to mixed sex troops with girls registering through the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts and boys registering through WOSUM.

7. I thank: Robert Blair St. George for noting the prevalence of Iroquois names on the map of Camp Sacajawea and suggesting this line of inquiry.

8. Although Grinde's theory has received some criticism (see Tooker, "The United States Constitution and the Iroquoian League"), the theorized connection between the Iroquoian and United States governments has gained popular acceptance. Therefore, his theory has relevance to my argument, which traces the popular European-American imitations of Native American behavior in Girl Scouting.

9. I use the past tense to refer to the Iroquois here intentionally, but do not intend to imply that the Iroquois no longer exist nor have a culture developing in the present. Rather, in terms of playing "Indian," the image of the Native American is based on their past culture, particularly that from the time of European settlement, which Grinde describes.

10. This presumably refers to a personal dish, while the first mention of dishes refers to serving dishes.

11. When using the word domestic in the following argument, I intend to denote the permanent homes and communities where the girls in the Delaware-Raritan Girl Scout Council live, whether urban, suburban, small town, or rural. Although not intending to deny the impermanent structures of nomadic peoples the name "home," I do not write about those cultures in this work. Webster's definition of "domestic" denotes "belonging to the home or house," "relating to family affairs," and "of one's own country, nor foreign," which I will use to mean "of one's own culture," not geographic area.

12. Fulfilling Dining Hall duties also fulfills an objective of Girl Scout camping: "to provide training in citizenship through the give-and-take of community living in which each girl has a part in the planning and carrying out of the camping program" (GS *Standards* 1957, 7).

13. The camp uniform includes shorts and camp shirts, rather than a dress or skirt outfit (the official dress uniform).

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